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Prototypical Nepantla: Border Walls, Land Art, and the Discursive In-Between

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Prototypical Nepantla: Border Walls, Land Art, and the Discursive In-Between

by

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Dedication

Para Wendy, Neil y Jazmín y las flores en el desierto.

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Abstract

Prototypical Nepantla: Border Walls, Land Art, and the Discursive In-Between

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This thesis is an interdisciplinary analysis of the Border Wall Prototypes commissioned by the Trump administration through the signing of Executive Order 13767 on January 25, 2017. Through a hybrid analysis of place and body, this thesis seeks to expand upon existing scholarship addressing borderlands material realities by theorizing the links between spaces that enforce or invoke the international boundary through a barrier. In this way, I am able to theorize the discursive rupture enabled by the art collective Make Art Great Again's reframing of the BWP as historical land art. I refer to this conceptual tear as a nepantla scenario, wherein I understand the BWP as creating a state of in-betweenness that disrupts the intentions of the State's exclusionary geography. Throughout this thesis, I frame the Border Wall Prototypes as part of a conversation about border making events— infrastructural, legal, performed, artistic—in the U.S./Mexico border region.

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Introduction: A Note on Fences

I find many things distressing about the Trump administration's desire for a wall with Mexico. This unease morphs into a silent turbulence upon witnessing the infrastructural reality of these nationalist yearnings. There is a blatant dystopic world view that accompanies the "Border Wall." Visualizing such a structure inspires a sense of soon-to-come-inevitable apocalypse that the country has to safeguard against lest it be vulnerable to some external threat. I do not for a second believe these cues to be in any way coincidental. The "Border Wall", as most briefly refer to it, activates multiple locations in the imagination. As a kid in southwestern New Mexico, I remember thinking of the border as synonymous with El Paso/Juárez. Las Cruces, it seemed, was an extension of the desert so far removed from the border it felt dishonest to call it part of any sort of border region. The border was somewhere nearby, but not too close. The fact that you could not drive in any direction for more than 30 minutes without coming across a government checkpoint was understood as normal, routine, typical not-border-zone life. The border was supposedly a long, winding stretch of thick, infrastructural something, snaking its way through the desert. I never imagined it as it actually is in San Diego/Tijuana: bars of oxidized metal connected by chain link fencing, standing in the sand. What it might be in the Gulf is a mystery to me, however it is slowly becoming more visible in my mind.

It is easy for me to recall the heat rising off of the car-heavy bridges and the choking scent of gasoline under the uncompromising sun in Ciudad Juárez to get through

the checkpoint into El Paso. The concrete and asphalt, imposing ramps, uniforms, and the dogs at the border crossing all seemed so unnecessary. Most of the time, if someone mentioned the border, I thought of the intimidating ramp ways (what if you got in the wrong lane?) and the rising temperatures, compounded by the waiting. When I was in high school, there was a barrier placed in Arizona. I was not surprised when the wall went up— I could still clearly recall when Arizona passed SB 1070, which gave police the authority to demand an individual's identification documents for the purposes of policing immigration.[1]

A little over a decade later, in July 2018, the Trump administration began construction of border barriers outside of Santa Teresa, New Mexico to little media attention. Dozens of environmental protections were waived.[2] I was visiting my parents in New Mexico when I learned this. As they shook their heads over dinner, I felt that the joke was on our sense of loss: ultimately, the desert can be sacrificed. Growing up in Southern New Mexico was always about how the state was an abandoned desert wasteland that must be crossed in search of an oasis. The oasis tended to appear in the form of lush golf courses in this drought plagued place. Those golf courses laid lush and empty to me, mirages denying the reality of the little water there was to create a fantasy

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The controversial bill, titled the Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act passed in 2010, policed the movement of people through public space and criminalized the undocumented body— under the law, moving through Arizona without immigration documentation was a misdemeanor.

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Associated Press. "US Waives Environmental Laws to Replace Border Barriers in New Mexico." *The Guardian*, 23 Jan.2018, Web.www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/jan/23/us-waives-environmental-laws-to-replace-border-barriers-in-new-mexico. Accessed 10 Sept. 2018

space, surrounded by a chain link fence that seemed to want to cage in the sky for a membership fee. My life in this particular borderland taught me that much of the border is as much about fencing as it is mirages. Life is structured around the spaces that are either the supposed wasteland of the desert or an oasis. Both of those options are themselves, not true. However, the fences suggest otherwise.

The current administration has weaponized the figure of a "big, beautiful" southern U.S. "Border Wall" as both discourse and spectacle since the campaign trail. This has continued in the form of inauguration speeches, executive orders, policies, rallies, and government shutdowns. The phantasm of said wall has not faded from the administration's day to day rhetoric or policy.[3] More than it could accurately be described as an accomplished campaign promise, it is a haunting materialization of U.S. security logics that predate the current administration. Prior to and under the Trump administration, the United States government has presented human rights violations that occur along the U.S./Mexico border as necessary national security measures. This insidious catch-all is the underlying rationalization that has been cited by multiple administrations to justify the need for border barriers.

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The Guardian reported that while visiting the Prototypes in the Spring of 2018 President Trump declared that "For the people that say no wall, if you didn't have walls over here, you wouldn't even have a country." This is a repeated line from the campaign intended to justify the need for a wall in order to preserve the nation.
(Carroll, Rory. "Trump in California: First Official Visit Met with Protests and Scorn." *The Guardian,* 13 March 2018.Web.www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/mar/13/trump-in-california-first-official-visit-met-with-protests-and-scorn. Accessed 30 Sept. 2018.)

Maybe the scale is what makes it Trumpian, but it is neither unique or exceptional in intention or ideology. Regardless of this speculative possibility, multiple regions along the U.S./ Mexico border are familiar with infrastructural spatial impositions. As a reality that exists in different types of fencing, border barriers, and some patches of repurposed landing mat, they are a heavy-handed imposition of a juridical horizon line. At minimum, the legal, economic, ecological, topographic, and cultural materialities of the almost 2,000-mile border dictate the terms of engagement about what exactly the "Border Wall" would mean. In turn, existing barriers aid in shaping imaginaries while hinting at the possibility of another, perhaps graver, material articulation. As an imagined physical structure that is invoked ideologically, the "Border Wall" is an architectonic feat that arouses clear notes of American nationalism and exceptionalism on par with the Cold War's Space Race.

While co-constitutive, the relationship between narratives and structures are only the surface of the polyvalent borderlands ecosystem today. In my analysis, I aim to contribute to Latinx, borderlands, and cultural landscape studies through a focused examination of the eight Border Wall Prototypes commissioned under the Trump administration, which stand outside of San Diego/Tijuana. My thesis combines elements of performance, art history, and cultural landscape studies that focus on power and spatial organization which shape performance to theorize the links between sites that enforce or invoke the international boundary through a barrier. Integrating insights from borderlands historians focused on dynamics of the U.S./Mexico border and Anzaldúan theorizations of the border in my inquiry of the Border Wall Prototypes. This interdisciplinary

approach allows me to dissect intersections of scale and purpose in infrastructure space in the Otay Mesa and the seemingly unrelated genre of land art in the context of desert landscapes.

My case study of the Border Wall Prototypes and Make Art Great Again's claim that the structures are representational art forms allows me to examine how large-scale infrastructure projects can be discursively destabilized. Make Art Great Again places the Border Wall Prototypes within the category of high art. Following suit, this argument contextualizes the Border Wall Prototypes through border art. This work takes its guiding definition of border art as art that is entangled with the body, taking from Katherine G. Morrisey and John-Michael H. Warner's edited collection *Border Spaces: Visualizing the Mexico–U.S. Frontera* (2017). Following the premise set forward by *Border Spaces*, this work sees itself as contributing to discussions about border-making events. Such instances include art events as constitutive of the built environment. The Border Wall Prototypes are part of a series of border making events that create a third landscape of ostensibly contested territory along the international boundary. The breach of this territory in the form of crossing is the excuse through which the U.S. is able to justify campaigns of state terror, thereby producing geographies that classify bodies as unworthy, unsanitary, exceptionally un-American. I contend that bodies react to inscriptions of power, which are evidenced through individual and communal reproductions (performances) of spatial practice. I read the Prototypes as both structure and performance that evidence an intended exclusionary geography as part of marking the international divide. Taking spatial and material dimensions of the border as evidence

of these logics, I am able to broaden an embodied analysis of how the U.S. government perpetuates exclusion through the conceptual figure of the "Border Wall" and use of physical barriers. A subset of performance studies has long considered everyday actions as an important locus of analysis.[4] Consideration of how these dynamics occur on the border region are crucial for Latinx, borderlands, and cultural landscape studies. This is even more true in the current political moment in which the everyday interactions and movements of the most vulnerable are characterized by state impunity directly responsible for a litany of traumas and an overall escalation in collective precarity for Latina/o/x and migrant communities.

My ideas concerning representations of the U.S./ Mexico border immediately prior and after NAFTA are culled from border art historians. Claire Fox's *The Fence and the River: Culture and Politics at the U.S.- Mexico Border,* published in 1999 and focused on a study of material culture from 1991-97. This periodization is further contextualized by Ila N. Sheren's *Portable Borders: Performance Art and Politics on the U.S. Frontera since 1984*. Sheren provides context for the increased militarization from the late 1980s into the first quarter of the 21st century, looking at the interdependence between the U.S. and Mexico (the Bracero program), industrialization on the border (the Border Industrialization Program and its maquiladoras), migration, and violence (the War on Drugs). Both of these scholars have contributed to my reading of the Border Wall

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In regards to built environment history and cultural landscape studies, many scholars borrow from this subset of performance studies that include Michel de Certeau, Bruno Latour, and Irving Goffman.

Prototypes as a conceptual springboard within a larger trajectory of border art. My own thoughts are also nourished by Amy Sara Carroll's *Re-Mex: Towards an Art History of the NAFTA Era* (2017). I second her critique (alongside George Yúdice's) on the ways major border art events such as in_Site understood itself as a disruption of the U.S./Mexico border, but instead cooperated with U.S. capitalist interests and narratives. This dynamic is one I discuss further in Chapters 2 and 3 as one of "NAFTAfication", borrowing from Carroll's lexis. All of these border art histories share the view that the border is not a fixed entity and that it entails a series of metaphors, contradictions, binaries, histories, subjectivities, narratives, and materialities.

While both academic and journalistic articles on border art rely on visual analysis for different reasons, both tend to read artworks that take place on the border through a lens of political art. Almost as a rule, this analysis favors understanding art that occurs anywhere in the border region as inherently transcendental and aimed towards spreading messages about injustice, unity, or shared humanity. Journalistic titles alone help give a sense of this trend: "For Artists Near the Mexico—U.S. Border, Threat of Wall Fuels Art" (Artsy, March 2017), "Protest Art in the Era of Trump" (The New York Times, Feb. 2017), "A Time for Guerrilla DIY: How the Mexico–U.S. Border Became a Hub for Protest Art" (The Guardian, Feb. 2017), "The Chicano Artists Transcending the US-Mexico Border" (Vice, July 2017). Little is given to understand motivation or context for these actions or the particular conditions of a specific location that inform the context of the work. This collapse tends to understand any border location as being the site at which immigration and detention occurs. This fosters a double ended reductionist narrative in

which migrants are willing to risk anything to have a shot at surviving long enough to stake a claim to the American Dream— often in doubly reductionist narratives of immigrant exceptionalism. This is not to suggest that political art does not occur within border art; rather, I want to stress that border art is not inherently political art.

Further analysis regarding the ways in which State power inscribes itself into landscape and border barriers (such as the legality of which side can be used as canvas[5]) is needed to fully articulate how a border is represented. As such, there is a need to ask questions about place-making in a political and embodied context. Most recently, the Pacific Standard Time: LA/LA exhibitions in Los Angeles between September 2017 to January 28, 2018 have provided opportunities for navigating the relationships between materiality, subjectivity, rural and urban histories in the borderlands and transnational stages. LA/LA is both Los Angeles/ Latin America, center/periphery, Latina/o/x/Latino Americana/o/x, etc. Guadalajara based artist Jose Dávila's "Sense of Place", which stretched across Los Angeles physically as well as temporally, also exists in the intersection of installation work and built environment. The eight-foot cube sculpture, commissioned by L.A.N.D. (Los Angeles Nomadic Division, a non-profit arts group) as part of the Los Angeles exhibition of LA/LA, was designed to be slowly disassembled and rotated around various sites in the city over a period of nine months. Through the

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See: Margaret Regan's essay "How the Border Wall Became a Canvas: Political Art in the Mexico—U.S. Border Towns of Ambos Nogales" in *Border Spaces: Visualizing the Mexico—U.S. Frontera* (2018).

insertion of the cube into the cityscape, the work was designed to raise questions about geography, placeness, sensory perception, time, the city, and one's relationship to place.

I am influenced by spatially rooted, contextually informed, and embodied analysis that seeks to challenge single narratives about a place is. To this end, my analysis is in keeping with the academic traditions of both Latinx and cultural landscape studies as an interdisciplinary project. Primary resources on the materiality of the Trump administration's border wall prototypes range from my own field research on site, Make Art Great Again's petition and website, Executive Order 13767, and the text of the Antiquities Act of 1906. Secondary sources of the site are characterized by anecdotal, journalistic and even digital explorations provided via Google Maps as well as histories of the creation and policing of the U.S./Mexico border. My own intellectual formation is indebted to writings that raise questions about how daily interactions are structured by legal, cultural, and lived environments. One of the first writings that had me consider these dynamics in the border region was Ramon Rivera-Servera's chapter on queer fronterizos attending different gay bars in Arizona after the passage of SB 1070[6] (named the Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act), in *Performing Queer Latinidad: Dance, Sexuality, Politics*. The tremendous interdisciplinary work of María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo's *Indian Given: Racial Geographies Across Mexico and the United States* points toward a macro-transnational historical investigation of the

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SB 1070 expanded the exclusionary implications of the border into the policing of the public sphere by granting Arizona police the authority to ask for immigration documents.

indigenous body as a site of inclusion and exclusion (border making) from the level of the archive into the contemporary moment overwhelmed by a discourse of militarization, border security, and violence associated with the war on drugs. Samuel Truett's *Fugitive Landscapes: the Forgotten History of the U.S.–Mexico Borderlands* regional focus helps illuminate the intricate ways that individual, community, and national identity come to be interwoven. Both Saldaña-Portillo and Truett's work, especially in terms of a regional analysis, provide frameworks for exploring the project of empire building and led me to consider how this empire building plays out in the Trump era.

Likewise, Paul Groth's "Frameworks for Cultural Landscape Studies" and Dell Upton's "Architecture in Everyday Life" embolden my choice to correlate a reading of the scale of the built environment with that of border art events. Upton's observation that the built environment is on the same scale as the "Everyday" and is itself a factor that shapes us, organizes us, dictates the flow of our lives and how we in turn shape our surroundings is one that resonates with the ways in which art is entangled with the body. Further, the theoretical conceit that the Everyday is a site of analysis is shared by writing on performance. Upton's observations bring to mind Bourdieu's habitus, and as such, the built environment is as much evidence of lives lived as those lives are evidence of the built environments' porous and extensive nature. Both large scale art works and architecture raise similar methodological questions about how to examine them as objects. Drawing on their similarities raises questions about the legitimacy between the binaries and implications of what is cast as aesthetic versus the necessary.

As a way to address these questions, I utilize the Border Wall Prototypes as a theoretical springboard that exhibits the features of modernist abstraction, modernist architecture, and everyday infrastructure. Architect theorist Keller Easterling's *Extrastatecraft: The Power of Infrastructure Space* is a key text informing my theoretical framework. Easterling is in interested in assessing how the intended role as well as real consequences of seemingly benign space. Her analysis of supra structural controls allows for a macro view of what something such as the Border Wall Prototypes are intended to do for the nation, the implications of which are global. In part an answer to these questions, the first chapter introduces the Border Wall Prototypes and Make Art Great Again's petition to make them monuments. While I see the Prototypes as monuments of a hostile Everydayness that looms over the borderlands, I also recognize how the Prototypes, as art, stand to complicate the intentions of this.

In the second chapter, I consider Anzaldúa's famous metaphor of the border as an open wound. This begs the question: where, exactly is the wound, what keeps it open, what could wound care possibly look like? Through her description of "el destierro/the Lost Land", Anzaldúa presents border making as a repeated event. She opens the stage in time:

> In the 1800s, Anglos migrate illegally into Texas, which was then part of Mexico, in greater and greater numbers and gradually drove the tejanos… from their lands, committing all manner of atrocities against them. Their illegal invasion forced Mexico to fight a war to keep its Texas territory… Tejanos lost their land and, overnight, became foreigners. (28)

The scene is that of the Alamo (1836), a *destierro* repeated in 1846 (Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado), 1848 (the archival witness in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo). The

scene of annexed land (destierro) features the manipulation of rivers (who gets to have water), and the exploitation of people's limited resources. This exploitation comes in the form of back breaking, extractive, toxic labor, delousing facilities, language loss, assimilation, and state violence. Diana Taylor's influential *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*, I understand this complex history of colonization of both land and people as forming a repeated scenario of discovery, in which the wild frontier is conquered by the stand-ins of the new United States' order and discipline. Borrowing from Anzaldúa and Taylor in tandem, in Chapter 2, I argue that Make Art Great Again's reclassification of the Border Wall Prototypes as land art disrupts the dominant scenario and creates a nepantla scenario (a rupture that creates a nebulous in-betweenness of transformative potential).

The Border Wall Prototypes outside of San Diego in the Otay Mesa stand to give us some clue as how the open wound of the U.S./Mexico border is enforced representationally and physically. In Chapter Three, I analyze two case studies I understand as operating within the logic of U.S. spatial exceptionalism in connection to the Prototypes. I examine the Estudio Pi/ Mamertine Group collaborative project, which I call El Muro Rosa, and Sterling Ruby's sculpture "Specter", which was commissioned for the 2018 Desert X Biennale. Where the second chapter examines the entanglements of the border, border art, and bodies, Chapter Three seeks to contour the intention or "disposition" of the Prototypes, the kinds of future they signal, and their representational relationship to land art. Border art histories, built environment histories, and cultural landscape studies have already provided strategies to think through the U.S.'s Border

Wall. As such, there exists a pantheon of tools with which to engage both the wall's intended function and meaning as well as an interruption of that meaning. There is no doubt that the Border Wall Prototypes are part of a large infrastructural technology that has developed alongside anti-immigrant discourse and have now become part of a legal precedent that can further exclusionary paradigms. If interruptions can begin to destabilize the ways in which concepts such as "national security" are used to justify the wall's existence, we can work towards pulling at the seams of boundaries and move towards new formations.

The U.S. Mexican border *es una herida abierta* where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country— a border culture. Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish *us* from *them*… a borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition.

-Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands: the New Mestiza = La Frontera*, 1987

The navigation of everyday spaces, the ordinary, unexceptional sites of most of our sensory and intellectual experiences, is the primary arena within which selfhood and personhood are forged. In the give and take of everyday life we learn the personal and social meanings of our agency. Repeated individual actions become practices and clusters of practices become social formations.

-Dell Upton, *Architecture and Everyday Life,* 2002

The far-reaching, the boundless future will be the era of American greatness. In its magnificent domain of space and time, the nation of many nations is destined to manifest to mankind the excellence of divine principles; to establish on earth the noblest temple ever dedicated to the worship of the Most High — the Sacred and the True. Its floor shall be a hemisphere…

- John O'Sullivan, *The Great Nation of Futurity,* 1839

CHAPTER 1: MAKING ART GREAT AGAIN

This Chapter deals primarily with introducing both the Trump administration's eight Border Wall Prototypes, and a public petition by the art collective Make Art Great Again to preserve the structures as monuments. The art collective's re-identification of the Prototypes as historical land art complicates common-place understandings of infrastructure space, monuments, and representational art. The development of these barriers is tied to various formations of U.S. State power in the U.S./ Mexico border region. Through a hybrid analysis of place and body, this thesis seeks to expand upon existing scholarship addressing borderlands material realities by theorizing the links between spaces that enforce or invoke the international boundary through a barrier. The Border Wall Prototypes are here introduced by reading the spatial and performative dimensions of the objects. In this way, I am able to theorize the discursive rupture enabled by Make Art Great Again's reframing of the BWP as art works. I refer to this conceptual tear as a nepantla scenario, wherein I understand the BWP as creating a state of in-betweenness that disrupts the intentions of the State's exclusionary geography. Throughout this thesis, I frame the Border Wall Prototypes as part of a conversation about border making events— infrastructural, legal, performed, artistic— in the U.S./Mexico border region.

In December of 2017, a non-profit arts group calling itself Make Art Great Again,[7] (abbreviated as MAGA, a play on Trump's campaign slogan) formed by Icelandic-based artist Christoph Büchel launched a public petition to preserve the eight border wall prototypes constructed under newly elected President Trump's Executive

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The entirety of this thesis only uses MAGA to refer to the arts group Make Art Great Again.

Order 13767 (Border Security and Immigration Enforcement Improvements) as national monuments. Signed on January 25, 2017, E.O. 13767 was part of a flurry of orders signed in the first few days of the administration's installation in the Oval Office. The previous day, Trump signed the Executive Order Expediting Environmental Reviews Approvals for High Priority Infrastructure Projects (13766), which waived environmental protections and protocols for projects deemed "high priority" to economic policy and national security.[8] Taken together, the two actions complimented each other, allowing for the legislative backdrop that would solidify the nature of projects that were "of interest to the nation."

Make Art Great Again understood the eight objects that came about as a result of these executive orders as public land art. Thusly, their petition called for the samples to be preserved as national monuments. In a video made for Quartz magazine,[9] New York Magazine's senior art critic Jerry Saltz points out that Büchel is merely picking up on the "tropes of high minimalism." Specifically, Saltz cited the use of everyday industrial materials, landscape, and the precedent of the ready-made. Colliding these art movements into each other allowed Saltz to use the criteria of high art to demonstrate how he understood Büchel's motion to reposition the BWP. As such, the "alienated majesty" of

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EO 13766 was immediately followed by three presidential memorandums regarding the construction of the Dakota Access, Keystone XL, and "Made-in-USA" pipelines. The sequence of the documents is evidence to the multiple motivations in accelerating the process of creating infrastructure space for extractive purposes.

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"Is Trump's Border Wall Art?" *YouTube*, uploaded by Quartz. 22 Jan. 2018, www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Ac156HzS6k. Accessed 30 Sept. 2018

the Border Wall Prototypes could be translated into the visual language of abstract modernism and representational form by a syndicated art critic. Saltz provided Büchel the approval of one of the most public voices of the United States art world as letters critical of the action circulated and art institutions, chiefly the San Diego Museum of Contemporary Art, sought to separate themselves from Büchel.[10] By reading the Prototypes as land art, this argument challenges the supposedly objective, protectionist reasoning that federal policies deploy to justify the construction of border barriers. As public works, the Prototypes demonstrate an aestheticization of current policy, function as organizational infrastructure space, and evidence a social anxiety around access to the supposed protections afforded to individuals in the United States. Art-architecture seeks to do engage similar themes of space and access. In reading the Prototypes as public land art, Make Art Great Again disregarded the federal government's justification to commission the mock-ups. Following this thread, I understand the art collective as more than an innocuous novelty. The collective's motion to preserve the Border Wall Prototypes recognizes a similarity in building typology (barrier) and art genre (sculpture). Exposing the connective tissue between representational form (barrier, sculpture) and institutions (State, museum), also pushes back against a public perception of art (especially art at the U.S./Mexico border) as a transcendental or utopian project.

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Hilburg, Jonathan. "Artists Push Back against Christoph Büchel's Border Wall Project." *The Architect's Newspaper*, 13 Feb. 2018, archpaper.com/2018/02/artists-open-letter-christoph-buchels-border-wall/. Accessed 30 Sept. 2018

Real and Fake Walls

There are three aspects of the "Border Wall" I want to foreground in order to understand how the BWP are both heir to previous policies and departures from those same legislative conditions. My use of quotation marks is meant to underscore the extent to which this structure does not in, fact or form, exist. As a concept, the "Border Wall" is designed to operate in the fields of both material physical structures and abstract, rhetorical discourse. The following section discusses both of these realms, but makes clear that for the purposes of this thesis, the "Border Wall" is a rhetorical construction. I approach this by first providing a discussion of the actual material that currently exists in the form 700 miles of fencing along the international divide. Secondly, the rhetorically invoked concept of a wall has no material corollary in the border region. Finally, I discuss the specific case of the Border Wall Prototypes as intended by the Trump administration.

There has been some form of border marker since the boundary was made in 1848. The first border markers were placed as part of the binational effort to delineate the boundary. The Border Wall Prototypes represent how infrastructural projects have become sophisticated state technologies of exclusion in the post-NAFTA era. The history of fencing separating San Diego, California and Tijuana, Baja California is illustrative of this political context. Initially, the barrier between the two cities stretched 14 miles from Imperial Beach to the Otay Mesa Port of Entry. According to a Congressional Research Service Report submitted to Congress in 2007, the United States Border Patrol began building the barrier in the 1990 "to deter illegal entries and drug smuggling in the San

Diego sector." (Nuñez-Neto and Garcia, 2) This primary fence extended eastward 14 miles from the Pacific Ocean and was completed in 1993. This fence was 10 feet high and made primarily out of recycled steel landing pads from the Vietnam War. Bill Clinton's first administration introduced Operation Gatekeeper in 1994. His second term followed up Operation Gatekeeper with the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigration Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) in 1996. Specific mandates in IIRAIRA for the San Diego sector stipulated that the primary fence be reinforced with secondary fencing and integrated infrastructural systems such as patrol roads and increased Border Patrol presence. The new millennium saw President George Bush's Secure Fence Act in 2006 also added to the barrier between San Diego and Tijuana.

The Secure Fence Act relied heavily on IIRAIRA as the legal basis for promoting continued barrier construction, in particular section 102. However, the specific mandates for the San Diego barrier in Section 102(b) were removed, thereby allowing for an expansion of the fence beyond the initial 14 miles. The Secure Fence Act was able to extend fencing into other areas of the U.S./Mexico border by relying on the vagueness of Section 102 (a) of IIRIA. The section grants the Attorney General "broad authority to install additional physical barriers and roads 'in the vicinity of the United States border to deter illegal crossings in areas of high illegal entry into the United States.'" (Nuñez-Neto and Garcia, 3). The report notes that both "vicinity of the United States border" and "areas of high illegal entry" are not defined by or even clearly stipulated either in the section or IIRIA. Further, the Secure Fence does not provide any stipulations as to where or what these areas may be. The removal of the specific mandates for the San Diego

barriers consequently removed stipulations that limited Congressional spending on barriers to $12 million. By removing this part of Section 102, the Secure Fence Act was able to broadly identify other locations as "areas of high illegal entry," and lift the spending cap on funding for barriers. Interestingly, the Secure Fence Act itself does not set requirements for funding at all. Rather, funding was resolved through a spending bill for the Department of Homeland Security in October of 2006 which listed $1.2 billion in funds for barriers and related infrastructural technology.[11] Section 102(c) also waived environmental protections in order to expedite the construction of the barriers. Taken into consideration, current disregard for the precarity of wild and human ecology has been part of the legislative record since the early 1990s. Bypassing environmental protections without pause for so much as feigned consideration through new executive orders is ultimately redundant given the authority provided by Section 102.

Since the Secure Fence Act was approved in 2006, the U.S. government has funded and built almost 700 miles of completed barriers on the U.S./Mexico border. These barriers are a combination of pedestrian and vehicle barriers, some of which have been added to or updated with bollard walls since the fall of 2018. These 30-foot barriers feature steel bollards filled with concrete, closely placed to each other and are topped by a flat steel panel. The existing fencing is concentrated in areas that are federal land, mostly in California and Arizona. The summer months of 2018 saw these bollard style

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Sherman, Amy. "No, Congress did not approve $50 billion for border fence in 2006." *Politifact*, 22 Jan. 2019, https://www.politifact.com/facebook-fact-checks/statements/2019/jan/22/facebook-posts/no-congress-did-not-approve-50-billion-border-fenc/.

barriers erected in remote areas such as Santa Teresa, New Mexico. Texas, with its abundance of private land, has proven to be legally difficult terrain for such projects to break ground. However, fencing dots the border towns of Del Rio, Eagle Pass, Laredo, McAllen, and Brownsville, reinforcing their spatial separation from their respective Mexican counterparts. These fenced areas, especially near ports of entry, are reinforced by cameras, thermal sensors, drones and X-rays. In 2017, Customs and Border Patrol reported that 16,600 of their almost 20,000 officers were to stationed at the southern border.[12] The reality of the "Border Wall" is that it is inaccurate to describe this interconnected system of combined police presence, military technology, and infrastructure as a wall.

Secondly, the "Border Wall" is rhetorical. It is imagined, invoked, peddled and touted as the most practical solution to the woes of the United States by Trump, his administration, and his supporters. Trump's advocacy for the wall reflects his investment in a bloviated sense of masculine American pragmatism and classic xenophobia. The wall is presented as an obvious and simple solution that Trump's marketed persona as a real estate developer is especially capable of seeing in a no-nonsense manner, free from the hang-ups of politicians. It is a metonymic device for a white nationalist unity that reaffirms its belief in American exceptionalism by actively denying access to those identified as being unworthy of being incorporated by the nation.

12

Valverde, Miriam. "Number of Border Patrol Agents Quadrupled since 2005?" *Politifact*, 1 Feb. 2019, www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/statements/2019/feb/01/adam-smith/has-number-border-patrol-agents-quadrupled-2005/.

The idea of the "Border Wall" is by no means unique to the Trump campaign, as is made most evident by the legal environment and objectives of Operation Gatekeeper, IIRAIRA and the Secure Fence Act as discussed above. Along with Operation Blockade/Hold-the Line (1993) in El Paso, Texas, each of these policies were transformational in terms of what they accomplished in border policing and shaping immigration policy, but they were also fairly recent. This accumulation of power to enforce exclusion and connote chaos on the U.S./Mexico border comes to characterize U.S. border policies in the late 20th century into the 21st. These policies are only part of a larger system of border enforcement that has grown into a daunting carceral force. As part of a political platform, the rhetorical wall is a symbolic centerpiece in the continued squabbling between the Democratic and Republican parties as both parties compete for to claim they are the upholders of the nation's character, virtue, ideals, etc. In this sense, the wall's shadow casts its clearest division between the interests of candidates and political affiliations.

The specific case of the Border Wall Prototypes in the Otay Mesa lies at the intersection of both the material and rhetorical wall. Legally, the BWP exist as a result of the Executive Order 13767. The document cited the Immigration and Nationality Act, the Secure Fence Act of 2006 and the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 as the legal precedent that granted authority for the order.[13]

13

United States, Executive Office of the President [Donald Trump]. Executive order 13767: Border Security and Immigration Enforcement Improvements. 25 Jan. 2017. *Federal Register*, pp. 8793-8797, https://www.federalregister.gov/d/2017-02095. Accessed 10 Oct. 2018.

However, in a departure from the fencing that was established through IIRAIRA and the Secure Fence Act, the Prototypes were never funded through congressionally approved funds. The eight Prototypes, signed into existence without congressional approval, range in cost from $300,000 to $500,000 each. According to Make Art Great Again's press release, the total awarded in private contracts for the Prototypes is $3.3 million.[14] The appropriations bill that was later approved by Congress in Spring 2018 granted $1.6 billion in funds for border "improvements". This spending bill funded the replacement of the landing mat barrier with bollard fences. None of the funds included in the spending bill were approved for use on the Prototypes.[15] Additionally, the bill does not allow for any funds approved by Congress to be used to build designs that come from the Prototypes. As such, the BWP exist as entities entirely outside of congressionally approved spending plans in perpetuity, the result of an executive order in the first few days of the Trump administration.

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According to an article published by the Associated Press, DHS redirected $20 million of its budget to pay for the demands of the stipulated by E.O. 13767. My speculation is that because Executive Order 13767 only states that the order be "implemented consistent with applicable law and subject to the availability of appropriations" (s.17) but makes no specifications about funding, the administration was able to secure funds from the appropriations available under the spending bill for the fiscal year 2016. Whatever funds the administration could have claimed, most likely came from the Department of Homeland Security to build the Prototypes given their status as high-priority infrastructure needed to "effectively achieve complete operational control of the southern border." (s.4(a))

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Page 673 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018, section 230 (a) divides the $1.6 billion between maintenance and design, with large portions to be used for "secondary fencing...along the south-west border in the San Diego Sector" ($251,000,000), 25 miles of "pedestrian levee fencing" in the Rio Grande Valley ($445,000,000). Specifically, the funds are "for replacement of existing... fencing". A remaining $38,000,000 is reserved for "border barrier planning and design; and $196,000,000 for acquisition and deployment of border security technology." (United States. Cong. House. Committee on Foreign Affairs. *Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018*. Section 230. U.S. Customs and Border Protection— Procurement, Construction, and Improvements. 115th Cong. H.R. 1625 EAH .23 March 2018. Congress. gov, Accessed 10 October 2018.)

The optics of building the BWP in the Otay Mesa location repeats the history of the San Diego/Tijuana as the first instance of the physical barriers between the two nations. San Diego/Tijuana becomes the testing site for special government technologies and infrastructure solutions that the U.S. pursues to "secure" the southern border. The BWP are a tool wielded by the President as an action that can be interpreted as strategic and objective (multiple designs, tests, reports, etc.) to fulfill a campaign promise in an expedited fashion. In this sense, the rhetorical wall's most approximate physical corollary is the BWP. Eight variations of one intention do not however, make a wall. As such, the material reality of the border wall is not fully articulated. Rather, it exists within the boundaries of the BWP's location in time and place. It is important to remind ourselves that while this discussion is invested in an examination of scale and a disruption of the intentions that produced the BWP, they are not representational art. They are monumental partitions constructed with government funding and surrounded by a chain link matted fence. Separating the eight walls from the pedestrian public optically, as well as spatially by placing them in the remote Otay Mesa, several miles east of the Otay Mesa Port of Entry implies the logic of a test site.

The current administration's material specifications entail steel and concrete, stipulate dimensions 30-feet from the ground up and 6 feet below. There is a demand for "transparency" in the literal sense: the administration requested "see-through" barriers for easy surveillance into Mexico. Additionally, the administration has demanded that the barrier be aesthetically pleasing from the U.S. side. All together, these are criteria for a landscape of fortification packed with the language of luxury. Intriguingly, the BWP are

not designed by architects. Instead, the federal government has used the Army Corps of Engineers and private contractors.

Ordering Space

Infrastructure plays a significant role in establishing the kinds of everyday repeated actions (crossing, walking, stopping, etc.) that are at the core of the State's strategy of exclusion at the border with Mexico. Infrastructure automatically orders objects, places, people into a space. Simultaneously, this ordering organizes how entities can flow in, out, and through environments. If the barrier reinforces ordering through Otherness, understanding it as a mechanism maintaining the categories of criminals and vandals, smugglers and state-threats is crucial. The policing of bodies through policy begins with borders: "Us" and "Them" binaries are entirely dependent on the symbolic ordering that plays out on the ground, organizing the body within the spatial project of nation and citizen. The construction of physical, psychic, real, and virtual borders creates codes of deference to dominant structures and entities such as the State, as well as transgression. Both map onto how individuals understand themselves within the larger material and political realities of their worlds. Doings and undoings of exclusion point towards a holistic understanding of how power inscribes itself into spaces: private, public, liminal, National.

In keeping with historical tradition, U.S. 21st century legislation barely hides how it serves the "fiction of white superiority" (Anzaldúa, 29). Bills that police space like Arizona's SB 1070 and its ensuing copycats operate through a vehicle of sanitary

citizenship by invoking the power of an archival document: identification documents.[16] In *Critique of Black Reason*, Cameroonian philosopher and political theorist Achille Mbembe states that such documents "[reactivate] the logic of race… with the increasing power of the ideology of security and the installation of mechanisms aimed at calculating and minimizing risk and turning protection into the currency of citizenship." This logic renders immigration bills as a continuum of colonialism. If we follow Mbembe and recognize that identification documents are part of a colonialist bureaucratic technology in the context of the U.S./ Mexico border, identification documents are but one manipulation of space in the territory ceded in 1848. This is brought into sharp relief by the current brand of nationalist necropower wherein migrants increasingly find themselves the object of draconian criminalization, given "no tolerance" for existing outside of the boundaries of worthy, United States citizens.

Cartographic and infrastructural endeavors similarly reshape geographies and populations as part of both producing and enforcing the international boundary. For instance: in 1928 the United States Department of the Interior began to chart out the Colorado River to build the All-American Canal. With a name that proudly declares its jingoism, the canal is a concrete wall that both diverts water, and serves as a deathly borer barrier. In this sense, the structure is evidence of intersecting policies which prioritize U.S. capital accumulation actualized onto the scale of everyday life through the

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The concept of "sanitary citizenship" is taken from Marcia Ochoa's work in *Queen for a Day: Transformistas, Beauty Queens, and the Performance of Femininity in Venezuela* (Duke University Press, 2014), where they use it to explain ways in which the racialized and queer bodies are excluded from both city and nation.

built environment. The goal of such large-scale projects is to transform locations through a manipulation and extraction of natural resources, including labor. This kind of spatial manipulation is consistent with Keller Easterling's concept of extrastatecraft, which I discuss in depth in Chapter Three. Foundationally, the basic premise of a border wall (and similarly, any port of entry) is the regional enforcement of the nation-state's sovereignty for the express purpose of international policing. Acknowledging these layers of power and materiality resuscitates thinking about the border as a space wherein these dynamics are constantly negotiated, and spatial analysis demands scale. Dimensions of all structures demand we observe how the built environment might create or affect movement, effectively creating contradiction and hybridity. The U.S./Mexico border region is comprised of 1,954 miles of distinct terrain, ecosystems, people, materiality, and economy punctuating each mile. A mythology of this expansive area as a sparsely populated wasteland is flattening to the natural variability of *la frontera*. This flattening is a symbolic erasure of kind of transnational dynamics and histories that have unfolded in region which I discuss further in the following chapter.

Abstracted through concrete, steel, and the scale of buildings which inform pedestrians about how or where to be in the landscape, the presence of any border barrier further reifies an "Us" vs. "Them" binary already implicit in the border itself. This binary is most obviously repeated on the border region as the battleground and territory still fought over. However, apart from the symbolic imaginary and borderlands scholars, neither the official governments of the U.S. or Mexico question the existence of the

border.[17] There is no continuous military presence other than that of the U.S. Customs and Border Protection. Migrants are not crossing in an attempt to claim the land. What is it about a migrant's claim to move across borders (an exercise of autonomy) to continue life— even if it is under the exploitative conditions of U.S. capitalism's thirst for cheap labor— that marks the migrant as so criminal? What anxiety could 1,954 miles of mountains, grasslands, deserts, hills, rocks, cactus, sand, field, forest, marsh, ocean induce other than perhaps a constant reminder of the land's own unyielding disregard for lines drawn on pieces of paper? Could it be the crossing itself? Such anxiety points towards competing discourses that are fundamentally at odds with one another. The political discourse that relies on protectionist logics to "secure" the southern border to keep out drug smugglers, criminals, etc. is one that identifies the northern bound border crosser as morally inferior and thus unworthy of entry. Baked into this moral argument is the implication that is such morally inferior persons are to exist on U.S. soil is the inevitable corrosion of the country's stability, immediately emanating from that point. This need to protect the country must be repeated in order to sustain the notion that people come to the United States because it is exceptional (and yet, somehow also easily corruptible). Conversely, as proven by many borderlands historians, sociologists, and journalists, migrants have trekked northward often out of desperation. While many have

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What I am referring to here is that no land, no territory, is being disputed in the legal sense. The issues, concerns, and objections to the wall are primarily rooted in human rights. The outliers are few and far between, and never invoked into common discourse: the cedding of Mexican territory to the U.S. in 1964 as a result of the Rio Grande river's changing path, or the Tohono O'odham's binational sovereign lands remain the most well-known and are largely disregarded by mainstream political discourse.

migrated in search of higher wages, migratory trends in the 2010s have seen an increase in migrants that are fleeing violence and political instability in the Northern Triangle (Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras) and most recently, climate refugees have made their way north after losing their crops.[18] This reality is one that is ignored entirely by the Trump administration and will not be resolved with the imposition of a barrier. However, the political discourse that sees migrants as threatening land, property, and national sovereignty is vindicated and assuaged by the promotion of the "Border Wall."

Borderlands historians have shown that the process of making and marking the border has been an ongoing project since the official charting out of the border itself in the 1890s. What is commonly referred to as a border barrier, fence, and the monumental category of wall, is more appropriately related to infrastructure projects that followed in the years after the passage of NAFTA as mentioned earlier. The process of militarization and fortification of the physical boundary markers along the U.S./ Mexico border, markedly absent along the northern border, is material evidence of how the tri-national trade accord's touted promises of collaboration and free exchange contradicted the realities of exchanges between the North American partners. As discussed previously, this trend continued throughout the decade of the 1990s through increased policing and border enforcement. By 2001, the War on Drugs had reached a point that prompted the Bush and Fox administrations to enter into the Security and Prosperity Partnership. The

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Milman, Oliver, et al. "The Unseen Driver behind the Migrant Caravan: Climate Change." *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 30 Oct. 2018, www.theguardian.com/world/2018/oct/30/migrant-caravan-causes-climate-change-central-america.

"smart border" initiative resulted in higher levels of surveillance. Joint conversations were held September 6, 2001. It is worth considering how these conversations may have also been a precursor to the surveillance, fear, and nationalist rhetoric that defines much of post-9/11 discourse. By May 15, 2006, Operation Jumpstart (under George W. Bush's second administration) deployed the national guard to the border.[19]

Keeping the above in mind is necessary in reading the state's actions on the ground both in terms of architectural scale and intent. The Border Wall Prototypes outside of San Diego, California in the Otay Mesa are evidence of a simultaneity of scale. The Prototypes represent a national project intended for international consumption squarely fixed into the regional fabric of their location in the context of San Diego/ Tijuana. Mainstream news coverage of Trump's visit to the prototypes highlights his conversation with border patrol officials who emphatically reply to his questions regarding previous border fencing between San Diego and Tijuana (made out of recycled Vietnam era landing pads and sheet metal) as "changing their environment," decreasing "illegal" crossings immediately and helping to control the "chaotic situation" by delineating the border infrastructurally.[20]

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Romero, Fernando. *Hyperborder: the Contemporary Mexico—U.S. Border and Its Future*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2008, pp. 68-74

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"President Trump Inspects Border Wall Prototypes." *YouTube*, uploaded by CBSNews Online, 13 Mar. 2018, www.youtube.com/watch?v=HZaYHCBfVqI. Accessed 30 Sept. 2018

"Trump Examines Border Wall Prototypes in California." *YouTube*, uploaded by The Guardian, 14 Mar. 2018, www.youtube.com/watch?v=YtSW5HEozWg.Accessed 30 Sept. 2018

STAKING CLAIMS: "BORDER WALL", LAND ART

The Border Wall Prototypes under the Trump administration signal an obsessive fascination with size and scale. Following the President's insistence of their stature and dimensions, the BWP are rhetorically inseminated with a gross, masculine excess. Whether it is the physical size or budget, the "Border Wall" is often presented in language that stands as a proxy for male prowess. The claim to extraordinary structure— which I identify to be any special, multifaceted spatial technology considered as part of the arsenal of U.S. national security— is the bedrock of the wall's legitimacy. Make Art Great Again's petition is an interruption of this site in that it represents an engagement with the spatial dimensions of the wall that contradicts the legitimacy of the "Border Wall" as a spatial technology. By using the legibility of high art as a representational from, Make Art Great Again's recasting of the BWP implies they are representational objects. Previous interruptions of barriers have ranged from creating the fence at Border Field State park or at Imperial Beach into a site of communion, binational picnics, and backdrops for other art forms such as photography. However, these interruptions have repurposed the existing barriers which still served their function as separational devices. Make Art Great Again's strategy is entirely premised upon staking a claim to the legitimacy of the BWP themselves, taking advantage of their inability to fully serve their intended function to divide and separate people or places in the Otay Mesa. Thus, the BWP's supposed legitimacy as fortification structures (i.e. "proper use") is destabilized in their public classification and identification as public land art.

Destabilization creates a rupture in discourse, leaving vulnerable the strategies that have been employed to bring these Prototypes into material form. The scale of a possible "Border Wall" only exists in relation to the images of the Prototypes. As mentioned earlier, the "Border Wall" does not exist outside of the political discourse that invokes its image. The "Border Wall" is a spectral presence within a representational imaginary of the U.S./Mexico border. Translated into the BWP's ability to signal a potential reality in which the specter of the structure materializes fully, the "Border Wall" appears when needed. The vastness and supposed emptiness of the desert landscape then becomes a canvas on which to test out this possible reality. As this argument has already cited repeatedly, the legislative conditions that facilitated the existence of the BWP are very much so a result of the post-NAFTA era and go beyond myopic framing and explanations crediting the Trump era.

Make Art Great Again framed their petition to preserve the Border Wall Prototypes by positioning themselves as "proud to announce the launch of the major land art exhibition PROTOTYPES." The press release briefly described the site as "consist[ing] of the eight border wall prototypes commissioned by the United States government and built as models for testing and evaluation for President Donald Trump's proposed border wall between the United States and Mexico." Further, Make Art Great Again presented the Prototypes as having "significant cultural value" and described them only as "historical land art." Taking such an adamant tone in their press release, the Prototypes became a site of representational inquiry. If they were art, what did that imply about the "Border Wall"? How might art be complicit in creating the exclusionary

boundaries between a unified U.S. and a divisive, foreign Other? Talking about the wall is an inherently political endeavor, but art is not so easily understood as having an inherently political role to play. As a representational from, art— in particular the genre of land art as evoked by Make Art Great Again in the United States— is often imagined as an intellectual exercise that inspires the viewer to consider a variety of themes about the relationships of an individual and society, the self, etc. By presenting the sample walls in the Otay Mesa as "historical land art", Make Art Great Again discursively performed the role of curator and recast the very political and supposedly necessary infrastructure as aesthetic, contemplative, representational objects. Make Art Great Again propelled the validity and legal potency of this claim by citing the Antiquities Act of 1906. The Antiquities Act grants authority to the Executive branch to designate national monuments by presidential proclamation, similar to the act of signing the Executive Order which established the demand to construct the Border Wall Prototypes in the first instance. Border art historian John-Michael H. Warner has described border art history as "dominated by the U.S. architectural occupation of the region" (*Border Spaces*, 202). While Warner mentions the materiality of the wall, but only sees it as backdrop or canvas. The nature of Make Art Great Again's petition implies an awareness of this tendency to only see the barriers as backdrops. Taking advantage of this gap between discourses and disciplines, this chapter has charted a course into various territories. As much a result of trying to work through my own questions about how space is organized, in particular the territory acquired by the United States under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, I want to think about how spatial arrangements have organized people

into criminal or hero, patriot or defector. It is important to foreground any study of the border barriers with the understanding that the barriers themselves are the result of policies put in place by the United States government designed with the intention to organize nationhood and sovereignty.

Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands: The new mestiza = la frontera* stresses the space of the border as well as the body. Using her concept of *nepantla* (the in-between) I am able to theorize how the Border Wall Prototypes could be examined from both the lens of performance and built environment. Nepantla is fundamentally rooted in border space and deserves further investigation and will be discussed further in detail in the next chapter. Alongside Anzaldúa, I use Diana Taylor's configuration of the archive and the repertoire to conceptually bridge the built environment and performance. I understand the sites of border fencing, border barriers and the more recent and extraordinary Wall Prototypes as Taylorian archives. As "object[s] of analysis… separate from the knower "they are "characteristic [of what] defines the archive… [wherein] historians might return to a past event or figure and offer a different interpretation or representation of it." As such, the archive illustrates a series of narratives.

Taylor's configuration of the repertoire refers to the enactment of "embodied memory: performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing— in short, all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, nonreproducible knowledge."[21] The ways in which

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Taylor, Diana. *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*, Durham: Duke UP, 2003. pp. 19-20.

power is inscribed into the site of the BWP (and the gaps in between) interest me as evidence of a repertoire. Refiguring the BWP and border barriers as archives follows Taylor's urging that we "need to consider that the archival object may very well be the product, rather than source, of historical inquiry."[22] As a moment where the archive acts on the body, the biometric identification requirements associated with legislation such as Operation Gatekeeper's IDENT phase are the most literal. However, my argument focuses on the obsessive desire to enhance surveillance on behalf of President Trump and the context of the BWP. Foucault's analysis of institutions, panopticism and biopolitics are extremely helpful and influence my conceptualization of the State's "panoptic preoccupation" (an obsessive desire to see-through as an element of design and border security) which I introduce in the next chapter.

If we assume the border as a fixed entity, an unquestionable imperative and not a construction over time, inscribed into space, we risk never being able to shake the hold of the State's tactics of empire. Likewise, assuming that borders are merely psychic or arbitrary, while true to an extent, bypasses the very real ways in which power organizes the material world. I want to borrow from anthropologist Maribel Alvarez here and stress that the border's success as a state project is "perhaps most evident in the generalized recognition as indisputable fact that the border is an artifact of our societal reality." (*Border Spaces*, 26) Border wall disruption tactics seek out the brass tacks of how this

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Taylor, Diana. *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*, Durham: Duke UP, 2003. pp. 17-20

artifact materializes in new forms. How that materialization is translated discursively and perfromatically signals both state and individual socio-spatial logics. In this work, we begin to understand the work the built environment represents through the Border Wall Prototypes. Further, this allows for interpreting the work it does on us— both necessary steps towards creating new ways to upend the national projects that serve to govern over diversity but not with it.

In sum, this chapter has introduced the political and theoretical legacies that have collided in order for the Border Wall Prototypes to emerge and be probed. In Chapter Two, I analyze the physical presence of the prototypes in relation to the history of border art and performance in San Diego/Tijuana. By engaging with the Prototypes as performances of the state, I aim to better understand the complexities of how the state has chosen to perform "United Statesian" as the dominant and exceptional form of citizenship in the Americas. By destabilizing the "official" narratives of the state, we can tease out ways in which discourses of power and spatial logic have been used and are employed in the contemporary moment. In order to situate the prototypes within the contemporary art practices of the region, I first examine how Make Art Great Again petition mobilizes the Antiquities Act of 1906 in order to discursively reposition the prototypes as a public land art exhibition. As a whole, this chapter has introduced the Border Wall Prototypes as a site that has been discursively repositioned, rupturing the intentionality of the state's technology and exposing its performative connections.

CHAPTER 2: THE WILD WEST AND NEPANTLA

> The Democrats, are saying loud and clear that they do not want to build a Concrete Wall - but we are not building a Concrete Wall, we are building artistically designed steel slats, so that you can easily see through it.
>
> -Donald Trump, tweeted Dec. 18, 2018

BORDER SCENARIOS

The crowd chants: "BUILD THAT WALL! BUILD THAT WALL!" You and I may or may not have ever actually attended said rally, but you and I know it happens every time the man smirks at his crowd, a sea of distinctive red caps dotting the masses. They voted for him, and he promises his "Border Wall" will be big and beautiful. He is not the first to promote a wall and he probably will not be the last. To quote Reagan, the border becomes "the frontline, a war zone"[23] at the southern edges of the country. These moments activate a border scenario. Perpetually metaphoric and occasionally literal battle field, the border's association with chaos is repeated through the promise of a wall that will secure the nation's border with Mexico. This chapter sets out to illustrate the State's dominant scenario in the context of the contemporary U.S./Mexico border. From this juncture, I then reexamine Make Art Great Again's use of the Antiquities Act of 1906 to classify the Border Wall Prototypes as land art. I read this as a disruption that creates an

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From: Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands: The New Mestiza = La Frontera*. 4th ed. Aunt Lute, 2012. San Francisco. pp. 33.

alternative border scenario, which I theorize as a nepantla (in-between space) according to Gloria Anzaldúa's writings on border art and more generally, the borderlands.

As briefly mentioned in the previous chapter, Taylor's concept of the archive and the repertoire conceptually bridge my interests in the embodied and the spatial dimensions of border barriers. Per Taylor's urging, I pay close attention to the way that the archive doubles as product and source of historical interpretation. As such, understanding built environments as a Taylorian archive requires understanding everyday interactions as the repertoire. Taken together, the archive and the repertoire are corresponding pieces of a dominant, repeated narrative Taylor refers to as a scenario. The archive provides the scenario with historical legibility and authority through the recording of events. The repertoire constitutes the embodied motions and dynamics that take place in a given scenario and repeat the actions accounted for by the archive. Taylor theorizes *The Archive and the Repertoire* around an inaugural scenario of discovery, in which the Spanish conquistador discovers the New World and claims the territory as that of the Spanish Crown. While the scenario of discovery is derived from Christopher Columbus' letter to the Spanish Crown detailing the 'discovery' of the 'New World' (and Bartolome de las Casas' subsequent retelling in his own journal), Taylor points out that the scenario of discovery itself has no original. Both accounts are retellings of events that were subsequently lost in the archive. As such, the scenario "is always in quotations, a copy of a lost copy…" (55) In this scenario, the Crown's authority is extended through Columbus' status as state proxy, his fleet and the native peoples of the New World stand as his witnesses while God observes as the ultimate spectator. The scenario is stabilized

as an act of transfer: recorded into the archive, it allows for the staging of the repertoire. Specific embodied movements, which are in essence ephemeral, are purposefully performed to be witnessed and recorded. In the process of recording, movement is restaged through the archive's stabilizing and legitimating power. As such, the scenario "functions as the frame that enables the transfer from the repertoire to the archive." (57).

Building off of Taylor's conceptualization of how scenarios are performed, in essence activated through a repertoire ("embodied practice/knowledge [such as] spoken language, dance, sports, ritual (19)), my own formulation in this chapter examines how Make Art Great Again's use of the archive ("enduring materials [such as] texts, documents, buildings, bones" (19)) ruptures the State's intended border scenario. I further identify this rupture as aligning with Gloria Anzaldúa's concept of nepantla, an undetermined in-between space that is both generative and chaotic. Taken in tandem, I argue that the conceptual tear produced by Make Art Great Again's repositioning of the Border Wall Prototypes produces an alternative, nepantla scenario. To contextualize the art collective's discursive turn in designating the Border Wall Prototypes as land art, I examine the ways in which the BWP work within a chronology of art events in the San Diego/Tijuana region.

Make Art Great Again's gesture represents a motion constitutive of performance. Here, I am thinking of gesture as able to mark a deviation in the national discourse and reference embodied movement. As a push or pull in a given direction, indicating, communicating, or addressing the manner in which the body is carried deepens an understanding of what may or may not be verbalized. Through the gaze, the

body's gestures and movements become legible. Additionally, gesture's double duty as verb and noun (the action and the act itself) sustains the ability to cross-read and re-dress the subtleties of Make Art Great Again's motions as a discursive turn to activate the performance dimensions of the Border Wall Prototypes.

One of the most obvious ways this is engaged is in the name of the group itself. The confusion with Trump's slogan is an intentional discursive and visual confusion the arts collective readily exploits as part of their gesture to classify the Prototypes as land art. Where many have created ironic plays on the infamous acronym and slogan of Trump's 2016 presidential campaign, the arts collective has monopolized on how any turn of phrasing will never fail to recall the candidate turned president. The slogan is inescapable, as every attempt to satirize or critique it must cite it. Synecdochally charged, the letters signal a wider ideological context and anxiety that promised "a big, beautiful wall" which Make Art Great Again hopes to highlight. Maintaining this rhetorical collapse and scopic confusion, Make Art Great Again will be abbreviated as MAGA for the duration of this thesis. The disorienting effects of using MAGA are also part of what I am theorizing as a nepantla scenario: a state of paradox, contradiction, and rupture that produces avenues through which we are able to move back and forth, transition beyond, connect to and from.

Scenarios exist as culturally specific imaginaries—sets of possibilities, ways of conceiving conflict, crisis, or resolution—activated with more or less theatricality." (Taylor, 13) The "sets of possibilities, ways of conceiving conflict, crisis, or resolution" on the U.S./ Mexico border in the culturally specific imaginary of the U.S.

exceptionalism tend to be bound up with the drama of a barrier. As a dramatic device, the barrier's rhetorical power relies upon theatricality: it "...strives for efficaciousness, not authenticity. It connotes a conscious, controlled, and thus, always political dimension that performance need not imply." (13) As briefly mentioned earlier, the scenario is an act of transfer, that as a "paradigm [it] formulaic, portable, repeatable, and often banal because it leaves out complexity, reduces conflict to its stock elements, and encourages fantasies of participation." (54) This paradigm is present in both the academic and popular representational field relating to the contemporary geopolitical border.

Gloria Anzaldúa's oft quoted metaphor of the border as an open wound is in direct relation to her description of the border fence. Claire Fox's study of border art history, identifies the two "archetypes" of this conflict as the fence and the river. Contending that these two markers organize art production in the border region, Fox grapples with the historical moments in which either the fence or river came into prominence as the tool through which the line was drawn. Ila Sheren's *Portable Borders*, which is the one of the most contemporary border art history texts published since Fox's, begins at the barriers at Imperial Beach/Playas de Tijuana. These scholarly perspectives hint at a collective imaginary and their use of fences and barriers serve to continually remind that collective of what the border's materiality is defined by, in turn demarcating what is imagined when the border is mentioned. Visualizing this division in three dimensions and through multiple actors, repeats elements of plot, characters, and outcomes. These stock elements tend to rely upon the representational availability and recognition of a dominant border scenario disseminated by the Hollywood Western.

THE WILD WEST

I refer to the set of imagined possibilities centralized around "taming" the arid border region in order to promote U.S. westward expansion and State making as the Wild West scenario. Central to this scenario is the Cowboy. Akin to the Spanish conquistador in Taylor's scenario of discovery, the Cowboy is a uniquely U.S. hero who functions as a stand in for order and control promised through the jurisdictions and implications of a North American Anglo sovereign nation-state. What can be said about the region to make it wild? The tropes of the Wild West are perhaps made most iconic by John Wayne in films like *Stagecoach* (1939). John Wayne is there to enforce law and order over this the chaotic territory. As the proxy for the U.S. government's interests, the audience is supposed to believe that this righteous white man is the solution to the vice and violence that occurs in the newly colonized, previously "uninhabited" (i.e. uncivilized and lawless) desert. In a very theatrical sense, the drama revolves around spaces coded as sinful. Characterized by a laissez-faire permissiveness of extremes, both the whore house and saloon are settings in which the threat of racial mixing occurs. In the Wild West, money is the great equalizer that grants access to coveted white female bodies and homosocial activities take place. Violence tends to arrive in the form of dark, accented bandits that loot and thus threaten the stability and order of white spaces. These characters are part of a scenario in the Taylorian sense, relying upon a very specific set of actions (Indians loot, Mexicans are morally flawed, John Wayne rescues) that facilitate one possibility (order that reinforces borders, and thus belongings and jurisdictions) in the backdrop of the desert. My point here in describing the Hollywood Western is to

speak generally of the scenario most recognizable in U.S. mass culture[24] and stand in for U.S. attitudes about the border region.

Geographer Patricia L. Price describes the concept of the Wild West as a project of "smoothing" a striated landscape. Borrowing from Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Price understands their spatial configuration of smoothness and striation (taken from Lacan) as one wherein "[s]paces can be both smooth and striated at once." (35) Quoting the French duo, Price adds: "we must remind ourselves that the two spaces in fact exist only in mixture: smooth space is constantly being translated, transversed into striated space; striated space is constantly being reversed, returned to smooth space."(35) The crux of Price's use of smoothness and striation is to illustrate what she believes to be the theoretical mechanism by which to explain Statecraft in the territories acquired by the United States under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and Gadsden Purchase in the mid-nineteenth century. Price writes that smoothness, which stands as a marker of internal homogeneity, is a marker of a desired "fullness" on behalf of the nation-state. Going further she States that while the "...geopolitical border may be firmly in place... real differences are always there." (36) These "real differences" are the "striations" in the "smooth" landscape. As useful as Price's reading of the smooth/striated landscape is, I am skeptical of the notion that any geopolitical border is fixed or in place— the history of

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For a detailed history of the archival sources that produce the Wild West scenario, see María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo's *Indian Given: Racial Geographies Across Mexico and the United States* (2012).

the U.S./Mexico boundary for one, attests to the real difficulty of establishing such determinate lines in the project of smoothing.[25]

Important to my argument moving forward is Price's positioning of the term landscape as having its genesis in the painting genre popular through the fifteenth and late nineteenth century (13-14). As an aesthetic form, the landscape was "... intimately tied to imperialism, both overseas and internally… Landscapes were controlled representations of the nature and people dominated by Europe; they were visual narratives of conquest that not only depicted but also reinforced this domination." (14) As such, the aesthetic genre beautifies and creates pastoral scenes reflecting State ideals of national sovereignty. Simultaneously, the effect of the landscape genre is to obfuscate the machinations of Statecraft that maintain these ideals or failure to accomplish them. Following this, the landscape genre is the corresponding archive to the scenario of discovery. That is to say that representations of landscape have historically been tied to stabilizing and repeating a scenario. In terms of the border, the desolation associated with the desert is a product of the smoothed landscape required to perform the Wild West scenario.

The space for complication provided by Price's framing of the landscape genre is useful here for my theorization of a border scenario in relation to MAGA's classification of the BWP as land art. If we can understand that landscapes are already State projects

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See: Rachel St.John, "A New Map for North America: Defining the Border," in *Line in the Sand: A History of the Western U.S.-Mexico Border* (Princeton, 2011), pp. 12-38.

that are translated into aesthetic objects intended to reinforce national boundaries, then we can understand the State itself as an artist specializing in the landscape genre. This of course requires that we agree with Price in her assertion that the function of landscape painting is to "naturalize the particular patterns they depict; their intent is to make such depictions appear straightforward, orderly, unproblematic, and enduring." (15) Quoting W.J.T. Mitchell, landscape is the " 'dreamwork' of imperialism" working on its own timelines, creating spaces that exist as reflections that fold in on themselves and "disclose both utopian fantasies of the perfected imperial prospect and fractured images of unresolved ambivalence and unsuppressed resistance."(Price, 16) In this sense, Manifest Destiny was the ideology that justified smoothing territory acquired by the U.S. through the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo to create an empty landscape. Similar to Taylor's formulation of the scenario, Price reads landscapes as "scripts that discursively construct particular understandings of place." (23) In other words: scenarios rely upon a series of repeated actions and objects that make events, people and places legible under a recognizable schema of values and attributes that are ideologically reproduced, verbally repeated, physically rehearsed. In the case of the border, the produced desolate and arid desert landscape is the result of a border scenario that I refer to as the Wild West scenario.

The legitimacy of the Border Wall Prototypes as a necessary and protectionist measure of the U.S. relies on the promulgation of the Wild West scenario. The "Border Wall" is an instrument of smoothing the striated space (taming the unruly), demarcating the limits of westward expansion (drawing the line, laying down order) and the final

destination of the State as a naturalized boundary (riding off into the sunset to fight another day). Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera* rhetorically plays with the border barrier to illustrate the theatre of the landscape. Opening with a contemporary moment in which the poem's speaker interacts with the border fence outside of Border Field State Park between San Diego/Tijuana, Anzaldúa describes the fence as "a steel curtain-- chainlink (sic) fence crowned with rolled barbed wire" (24). The following stanzas describe the border as both "wound" and "home." A "thin edge of/ barbwire" materializes both of these symbolic categories she uses to construct the setting. Barbwire enacts the violence implied in "wound," while also marking the liminal and non-liminal spaces implied in the category of "home".

NEPANTLA

Anzaldúa's experience of this particular border barrier is one that has already been lost in material terms: the fencing has since been "improved" (bollards, concertina razor wire) and the border line further fortified. In her poem, the Wild West scenario is invoked through the infrastructural dimensions of the border fence as a precursor to Anzaldúa's meditation on what the border represents (a wound). Following the poem is her most famous and quoted line: "The U.S.- Mexican border es una herida abierta where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds." (25) She continues to formulate this open wound as a third space where border culture is born. Despite the function of the border to separate (the binaries of safe, unsafe, us, them, etc.), the border, in Anzaldúan terms is a generative, "vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of

an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant State of transition." (25) This description of the borderlands maps onto her concept of nepantla, or the "liminal (threshold) spaces between worlds"[26] (1)

Gloria Anzaldúa's formulation of nepantla offers an alternative scenario to the Wild West's paradigmatic conquests and erasures. As a scenario that dominates the representational field of the U.S./Mexico border, the Wild West scenario enforces and naturalizes colonialist expansionary logics as handmaiden to the State's legislative and militarized reality. Nepantla, however, is also a bridging space that invites the messiness of complication, hybridity, ambiguity, and transformation. As such, nepantla has often been conceived of as a largely psychospiritual *space* rather than a literal *place*. *Light in the Dark/ Luz en lo oscuro* (2016), a posthumously published elaboration of Anzaldúa's theorizations edited meticulously by Analouise Keating, configures nepantla as a border site. The following is my own elaboration on nepantla which can be read in multiple ways, including interpretations which I may disagree or take issue with.[27] The subheading of the third chapter, "Border Arte," is "Nepantla, el lugar de la frontera." Anzaldúa opens the chapter with the following: "Border artists inhabit the transitional space of nepantla. The border is the locus of resistance, of rupture, and of putting together fragments." (47) In her description of the Denver Museum of Natural History's 1992 exhibition *Aztec: The*

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Anzaldúa, Gloria. Preface. *This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation*. Routledge, 2002. pp. 1-5.

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A good example that articulates my grievances with the lack of critical engagement with Anzaldua's oeuvre can be found in Juliet Hooker's "Hybrid Subjectivities, Latin American Mestizaje, and Latino Political Thought on Race." in *Politics, Groups, and Identities*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2014, pp. 188–201.

World of Moctezuma she dissects the ways in which indigenous artifacts are only presented as aesthetic objects of the past to be commodified and appropriated by institutions. Readers may recognize the aims of the chapter as a continuation of arguments in *Borderlands* concerning what she refers to as Western and ethnic aesthetics. In her critique of the exhibition, Anzaldúa theorizes the border (and borderlands) as a mobile site of contact, coexistence and conflict.

> "The museum, if it is daring and takes risk, can be a kind of "borderlands" where cultures coexist in the same site. The exhibition bills itself as an act of goodwill between the United States and Mexico, a sort of bridge across the border. The Mexico-U.S. border is a site where many different cultures "touch" each other, and the permeable, flexible, ambiguous shifting ground lend themselves to hybrid images. Border artistas cambian el punto de referencia… Each artist locates her/himself in this border *lugar*, tearing apart and then rebuilding the *place* itself. The border is the locus of resistance, of rupture, of implosion and explosion, and of putting together the fragments and creating new assemblage." (49)

Anzaldúa explicitly states that for her, this process is best represented by Coyolxauhqui. In this way, the *place* of nepantla is personified and embodied in the metaphoric image of the moon goddess. Nepantla requires an inverted transubstantiation in which the scenario of Coyolxauhqui's dismemberment and reassembly, a chaotic spectrum of simultaneous rupture and creation, is mapped onto the landscape.

From this point, Anzaldúa elaborates the complexity of nepantla. The border's space of in-betweenness and rupture (Coyolxauhqui's tearing and reassembly) is related to her concept of imagination. Cenotes (sinkholes) are transitional spaces and sources of imagination and fantasy that connects nepantla to other timelines or further transition. She defines nepantla in both place-based and embodied terms, as "...that uncertain terrain one crosses when moving from one place to another; when changing from one class, race,

or sexual position to another; when traveling from the present identity into a new identity." (56) As the space where multiple forces converge, their proximity holds them "...teetering on the verge of chaos…These tensions between extremes create cracks or tears in the membrane surrounding, protecting, and containing the different cultures and perspectives… Nepantla [is] the place where transformations are enacted...where we can accept contradiction and paradox." (56) This status of continuous contradiction creates a disorientation of space which she describes as the normal conditions of borderlands inhabitants (57). She describes this disorientation as indicative of being in nepantla: "To be disoriented in space is to experience bouts of disassociation of identity, identity breakdowns and buildups. The border [is] in a constant state of nepantla…" (57) Anzaldúa's theorization of nepantla is itself paradoxical.[28] Nepantla is both site-specific to the border and not. It is mobile in the form of objects and people that exist in contrast, opposition and with each other in places such as museums, galleries, or nations. It is unbounded, living within the body that goes through transition: psychic, sexual, class. In working towards an expanded theorization of a nepantla scenario, the site-specificity of the border is the first point of transition into the murkiness of rupture and reassembly. Crossing into the *herida abierta* of the San Diego/Tijuana border, the formal motions of transition Anzaldúa references open, exposing the border's hybridity. Keeping in mind that the museum and gallery can also be a borderland in nepantla, I begin to think about

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I perceive real dangers in her use of metaphor. I plan on elaborating my concerns and return to this in future work as I do not have space for it here.

how the border is mobile. Running along the continent, the U.S./Mexico border shifts through beach, hills, desert, mountain and finds itself back at the sea. A buffer between two nations, the border is nepantla and nepantla is all around me when I get to the barriers in Nido de las Águilas.

To get a good view of the Prototypes, you have to be in Tijuana. While the eight structures are on U.S. territory, the land they stand on is privately owned and cordoned off. These two words "cordoned off" come up again and again as I conduct research. Every time that I try to find out *where* they are, news reports just mention that they are "cordoned off." I imagine a flimsy series of winding ropes, like the chords and glass cases separating viewers from the paintings and objects in a museum, a circuitous chorale designed to displace the approaching visitor. In Anzaldúa's terms: the borderlands of the museum exhibiting border arte separates the Chicana viewer from her own culture (63). All galleries have their limitations. In this site-specific installation, the newly updated steel barrier is part of the viewing experience. The steel feels warm to the touch from the sun, but it does not burn. Like an oxidized callus, the beams remind me the border is a wound, a scar; it is continually razed and built up again, exposed to the elements and time. Through the steel bollards between the U.S. and Tijuana, I can see plainly why it is that Tijuana really is the place with the best view of this exhibition. As I get close to the oxidized steel bollards, I can peer through the slats clearly. If I crane my neck a little, stretch my gaze, arch my eyes to the west I can see the sort of rudimentary fencing one would encounter at a school playground or baseball field. It's not crowned with concertina wire, nor is it particularly foreboding. Just routine, sturdy fencing with a dense

and thick green tarp stretched around it so you cannot get a good view through it. From this side of the fence, the view is interstitial in nature: you can only get in from the gaps in the bars. The oxidized bollards have a space and robustness to them that if they were in a park, they would undoubtedly be the site of climbing games, panicky and euphoric rounds of tag wherein the smallest children slide through the grasp of their would-be captors. It is easy to imagine lovers meeting here, playing and pacing through, finding a place to lean and coyly hide. It is easy to imagine teenagers pose as they feel the steel under the sun and stretch for a Instagram photoshoot with friends, adding human glamor to a medley of desert, industry, the detritus of both.

Fig 1: View of bollard fencing obscuring four Prototypes from Nido de las Águilas, Tijuana. Dec, 12, 2018. Image taken by author

PANOPTIC PREOCCUPATION

This is purposeful design, after all. As part of "prevention through deterrence", the barriers are designed to discourage first, and then, to slow people down. Not everybody can or will be caught, but the idea is that the barriers will impede the possibility of moving freely and will put the odds in favor of increased apprehensions. As I walk alongside the slats, I am very aware that much of what is keeping me from seeing if I could slide through the space is optics— the height of them broadcasts exclusion. Almost like a massive building, it invites defiance. Almost as if daring me, the gaps in the bollards hint at what I can do: breach me, see if you can get through me. I am also conscious of the fact that children have been killed by the same optics of this barrier. The insistence of that the barriers be "see through" is a panoptic preoccupation. The mutual nature of the State's fierce insistence on being able to have scopic reach facilitated by the design of the border barriers and the way in which seeing through the barrier from the other side enables a scopic flight and movement through it, transgresses the mobility it claims to impede or deter. The State's obsessive need to iterate a desire and construct a need to literally see through the barrier in some way, even stipulating such as part of the design requirements for the Prototypes, evidences an anxiety best held in the all-absorbing nature of being preoccupied. Concomitantly, the ways in which access, mobility, and modernity are construed as emanating from the U.S. reifies the gaze northward as a gaze toward the center from the periphery of the border.

Michel De Certeau, in "The Practice of Everyday Life" posits that the city is defined by the possibility of three intersecting and simultaneous processes of knowing:

the production of its own space (espace propre), the substitution of a nowhen wherein individuals, blinded to the constructions of space "reproduce the opacities" of their conditions (thus flattening their realities) and the "creation of a *universal* and anonymous *subject* which is the city itself." (emphasis in the original, 385). Notably, he employs the figure of the city planner looking down on Manhattan from the vantage of the 110th floor of the World Trade Center to illustrate how this capacity to engage in surveillance is one which renders the city legible through a visual grammar. The logic of urban localities is accessible through "pedestrian speech acts" which constitute a language through which the intertwined narratives and experiences of the city can be heard. Pedestrian speech acts are continually negotiated, decoded, and repeated. They are cues that are easily recognizable and uttered and begin through the possibility of motion. Looking through the slated bollards, sight becomes movement through an envisioned (and thus embodied) pedestrian speech act.

I want to climb the bollards, to tell myself that this just something in my way. I want to feel my body work against it and find myself using its form to look back into the land that monitors the world but does not expect to be seen. De Certeau holds that due to the nature of masses, each member of which is living out intricate lives and subjectivities, movements "are not localized; it is rather they that spatialize." (387) The understanding of the urban environment, that space which has so preoccupied the imaginations of 20th century definitions of modernism, modernity, progress, potential, and human conditions, has always been rooted in some element of the embodied and how bodies move through and in between spaces. For De Certeau, conceptions of how everyday urban (ie modern)

life is embodied is readily available in the act of walking, which is both a voyeuristic practice and embodied spatialization. Each decision taken is a choice to see, move towards, or away from another locality through a shifting of the "ensemble of possibilities (e.g., by a place in which one can move) and interdictions (e.g., by a wall that prevents one from going further). Then the walker actualizes some of these possibilities. In that way, [they make] them exist as well as emerge. But [they] also [move] them about and [they] [invent] others. Since the crossing, drifting away or improvisation of walking privilege, transform, or abandon spatial element[s]." (388) I want to work this fence like a two-way mirror. Trouble is, you run the risk of one side shooting at you if you try. I am touching a slat and looking directly at a prototype as a Border Patrol vehicle drives past. I have crossed visually and they are looking for a body. Have they been driving in circles all day or did they just notice I was looking back?

ARCHIVE AGAINST SCENARIO

The barrier I am interacting with is $251,000,000 worth of new fencing.[29] Previously, the barrier between Tijuana and this portion of San Diego County was made of repurposed landing pads from the Vietnam war. When MAGA made their press release announcing their move to monumentalize the Border Wall Prototypes, the barrier was something you

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Page 673 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018, section 230 (a) divides the $1.6 billion between maintenance and design, with large portions to be used for "secondary fencing...along the south-west border in the San Diego Sector" (United States. Cong. House. Committee on Foreign Affairs. *Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018*. Section 230. U.S. Customs and Border Protection— Procurement, Construction, and Improvements. 115th Cong. H.R. 1625 EAH .23 March 2018. Congress. gov, Accessed 10 October 2018.)

had to touch and climb a bit to see over. You had to move on it in order to move through it. It is in this context that MAGA laid out an inaugural scene:

> President Trump proposed the continuous border wall between Mexico and the United States as a centerpiece of his 2016 election campaign. On January 25, 2017, he issued, as one of the first Presidential Executive Orders, 'Border Security and Immigration Enforcement Improvements,' stating that "the [Department of Homeland Security] Secretary shall take steps to immediately plan, design and construct a physical wall along the southern border, using appropriate materials and technology to most effectively achieve complete operational control of the southern border."

The press release frames the "land art exhibition: Border Wall Prototypes" as the result of hard, fast-paced policy. What is compelling about MAGA's press release is that it creates a rupture in the dominant scenario, effectively creating a nepantla scenario in the archive, through the archive.

The inaugural scene is not when the first stone or concrete slab was laid but when archival power was activated on January 25, 2017 when the President signed his Executive Order for Border Security and Immigration Enforcement Improvements. The decree that "the [Department of Homeland Security] Secretary shall take steps to immediately plan, design and construct a physical wall along the southern border, using appropriate materials and technology to most effectively achieve complete operational control of the southern border" rhetorically enacts the Wild West scenario of the border. Technical phrases such as "effectively achieve complete operational control of the southern border" assume a need to smooth the 2,000-mile boundary's striated line. MAGA's press release established the prototype's affiliations and dimensions:

> U.S. Customs and Border Protection awarded eight contracts to six companies to build the prototypes. Four are made of reinforced concrete, and another four incorporate additional construction materials. Construction of the eight full-scale prototypes began on September 26, 2017, giving companies 30 days to finish. The construction of the prototypes, all measuring around 30 feet (9.1 meters) tall, in the San Diego sector was completed on October 26, 2017.

Framing the private contracts as having been "awarded" by the Federal Government to multiple companies points to corporate entities that have been deemed capable and worthy of the task of taming the border through the procedures and language of design competitions for cultural institutions. One such example is the 2004 competition for the Martin Luther King Jr Memorial on the National Mall.[30] The monument itself is illustrative of the ways that figures who threaten the capacity of the State to smoothly create landscapes have to be tamed. Dr. King's politics have routinely been sanitized and reduced to a myopic understanding of non-violence. Purposefully placed between the Lincoln and Jefferson Memorials, the monument's placement establishes a spatial implication that Lincoln paved the way for Dr. King's political struggles and that Dr. King's message would critique (rather than confront) the views of someone such as Jefferson. In this sense, the spatial organization itself is evidence of a smoothing project of a political history. The anxiety around Dr. King's vocal condemnation of structural and historical racism was such that the sculptor was tasked with having to change the expression of the statue's face to guarantee that the image was not "confrontational."

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Davis, Charles. "No Longer Just a Dream: Commemorating the African American Experience on the National Mall" in *Diversity and Design: Understanding Hidden Consequences.* Routledge, 2016.

Ultimately, the monument's expression is based on an image of Dr. King when he met Mahatma Gandhi. This kind of control over a monument runs parallel to the ways in which border barriers, as smoothing technologies, become normalized as part of a natural order necessary to tame the border by their ability to order space.

By laying out the measurements and materials of the wall, as well as the purpose of the testing of the prototypes further emphasizes the intentions of the structures as inherently preventative. The final paragraph of the press release continues with the security logics, and casts the Prototypes as necessary, advanced technologies employed by the State.

> The walls are part of a multi-pronged security strategy to prevent the illegal migration of people, drugs, and human trafficking, and acts of terrorism and are part of a border enforcement zone, which includes patrol roads, lights and surveillance technology.
> With about $3.3 million contracted on the eight prototypes, the U.S. Customs and Border Protection will use what it learned from the test walls toward a final design for the nearly 2,000-mile-long Southwest border.[31]

The intention of the barrier is that it be constitutive of a "multi-pronged security strategy to prevent the illegal migration of people, drugs, and human trafficking. . .acts of terrorism" and "are part of a border enforcement zone" along with "patrol roads, lights and surveillance technology". The phrasing belies the larger project of heavily policing the border region in ways that go beyond the construction of the barrier. Here, the specifications cited from the Executive Order are a gesture towards having to secure

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"Press Release." *Prototypes*, www.borderwallprototypes.org/pressrelease.

more funding for future security infrastructure. While this is unsurprising, it may be difficult to imagine that a 30-foot concrete and steel wall along almost 2,000 miles is the tip of the iceberg in the State's current imaginary. Further, the $3.3 million in government contracts sets the figure of minimum government spending for mock-ups.

The eight Border Wall Prototypes are props used to trigger the theatricality of the Wild West scenario. Calling a public petition to treat the Prototypes as land art changes the set of possibilities allowed under the dominant scenario, thus rupturing it. By complicating the State's indented set of possibilities, MAGA reforms that which can be enacted. MAGA's call to cast the BWP as art establishes a nepantla scenario by discursively repositioning the BWP in relation to the archive. As a rhetorical intervention focused on the physical structures of the "Border Wall", MAGA capitalizes on the tropes and assumptions of the Wild West scenario's smoothing capacity in order to lay claim to a discursive authority. The signing of Executive Order 13767 mobilized the archive and launched the scenario of the "Border Wall". The document is what legitimates the construction of the prop on the stage. As previously stated, Executive Order 13767 itself cites three previous legislative documents: the section 8 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (1952), the Secure Fence Act (2006) and the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (1996). Accordingly, MAGA cites the Antiquities Act of 1906 as the legal basis for the validity of their call to preserve the Border Wall Prototypes. This tactic acknowledges the authority supplied by the archive. MAGA's argument relies on Section 2 of the 1906 Act, which prioritizes presidential proclamations:

> The President of the United States is authorized, in his discretion, to declare by public proclamation historic landmarks, historic or scientific interest that are situated upon the lands owned or controlled by the Government of the United States to be national monuments, and may reserve as a part thereof parcels of lands, the limits of which in all cases shall be confined to the smallest area compatible with proper care and management of the objects to be protected.

Syntactically, the first order of importance is the placement of all final and ultimate authority in the hands of the President of the United States and an implicit faith in "his discretion." The body vested with the political will and power to assign value within and over the country is imagined as male, able to oversee the continent to assess the worth of spaces to then protect these spaces, and as the final arbiter in that land's management. The act is ultimately about the State's capacity to draw lines, boundaries, and make decisions about what spaces are worthy of public consumption or private speculation. This is evidenced further on in Section 2 in regard to contested lands. However, the language of the act makes it clear that in the legal imaginary there is no such thing as a contestation in which the State does not resolve the issue for its own expansion and claims: "When such objects are situated upon a tract covered by a bona fide unperfected claim or held in private ownership, the tract, or so much thereof as may be necessary for the proper care and management of the object, may be relinquished to the Government…" The language makes it clear that tracts, lands, antiquities (however loosely defined), objects, and territories of interest that could be said to possess such can only be "relinquished" to the government. There is no room to consider how these lands

or objects may be protected or sacred to groups, the sources of "unperfected claims", as the only sovereignty recognized is that of the United States.

The word "relinquished" arouses a false sense of willful agency that hands off the territory on amicable terms. It could be argued that Mexico "relinquished" a third of its northern territory under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (which similarly ignored the "unperfected claims" of the Navajo, Comanche, and Apache, among others). What the word actively does is erase the structural and bureaucratic realities of colonialism that configure imperial logics. A commonplace, unquestioning understanding of the Antiquities Act sees it as one that incentivizes the legislative branch to create "protected" spaces for the public (which would require the creation of institutions and systems to manage the areas in accordance with specific regulations and guidelines) and "preserve" objects for the public in institutions (museums, universities, laboratories) "for the proper care and management of the object". The logic of the legislation is one that facilitated the State's capacity to seize land and objects in the name of social progress for a social imaginary that does not include the regions, peoples, cultures, or ways of life of those it pilfered from.

MAGA's citation of the Antiquities Act of 1906 strategically aligns their classification the BWP as historical land art within the political logic of the State. By presenting the BWP as objects worthy of preservation or historical value, MAGA implies that it is the duty of the executive branch to protect that object. Seeking incorporation into the national body wherein it may be managed and institutionalized for the benefit of social progress is consistent with the idea that the State is able to recognize which objects

are of interest to the nation and secure those interests. Simultaneously, this same discursive turn complicates how the act invokes spaces or objects it deems worthy of preservation. The Prototypes cannot neatly be read as antiquities, but they are clearly of a cultural time and place. They are already institutionalized objects, managed by Customs and Border Patrol. If they are not worthy of preservation and incorporation, at the president's discretion to create, preserve, and protect, then the BWP become temporary and superfluous rather than advanced and necessary security technology. To not incorporate them is to say they are separate from the State, literally not of it, weakening their relationship to the nation. To not manage them is to have them function only as objects that were ultimately failed in what they sought to achieve— or worse: to be nothing more than an aesthetic venture, a luxury for public consumption and contemplation, but not utilitarian or needed.

LAND ART

As a result of MAGA's complication to the Prototypes and the application of the Antiquities Act of 1906, wherein the Border Wall Prototypes' relationship to the State's spatial, social and political imaginary cannot be easily resolved or negotiated, a conceptual tear occurs. This tear on the Otay Mesa is an Anzaldúan nepantla: a third space that neither belongs or does not belong in which the chaos and messiness of borderlands (and here, bordered lands) shifts like a tectonic plate. Further, the Antiquities Act of 1906 allows for understanding how MAGA's gesture to monumentalize the BWP one that disrupts the discursive separation between art objects, monuments, infrastructure

and the sociopolitical contexts that condition the exaltation of one and a blindness towards another. While these concepts remain disjointed, proliferation for both an unquestioning arrogance about art's relationship to power as well as power's ability to escape accountability and present itself as exceptional in scope, scale and moment. Turning to the spatial and embodied allows for understanding how the implications of the legal basis for MAGA's petition gesture towards shifting imaginary geographies of the U.S./Mexico border.

To take an example from border art history, much of Guillermo Gómez-Peña's oeuvre and aesthetic, his manipulation of arche/stereotype, to borrow from poet and art historian Amy Sara Carroll, playfully capitalizes on the audience's ability to recognize these representations of mexicanos, indios, mestizos, and fronterizos. These arche/stereotypes Gómez-Peña manipulates in his work are firmly rooted in the images and characters associated by the border (the characters of the Wild West scenario). Gómez-Peña "repeatedly materialize[s] the terms by which the Mexico-US border came to allegorize and thus accessorize not only a greater Mexican but also a general postmodern-becoming-neoliberal consciousness." (Carroll, 252) The MAGA call, in reclaiming the Prototypes, similarly exposes a neoliberal consciousness: art products are not apolitical nor are the reactions to it.

MAGA's spatialization of the BWP aligns them with the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, which is significant in a conversation about symbollic relationships. While the distance is navigated through a drive that begins at the Museum's downtown branch, the intention is to signals the incorporation of the BWP into the world

of elevated art or objects of cultural merit that better society (such the objects and holdings inside of the MCASD). Establishing a spatial association in which visitors would begin at the museum, cross the border, then return to the museum creates a spatial looping that centers the stability of the Museum as the point of departure and return for the viewing and interpretation of art and art experiences.[32]

The experience of the East Otay Mesa parcel performs the concreteness of the border's "first line of defense". Viewing the BWP from the Mexican side involves pilgrimage. To come from the U.S. side, the first crossing is either at the San Ysidro or Otay Mesa checkpoint. Otay Mesa is only three miles west of the site, but it is chiefly a commercial checkpoint that connects to the industrial sectors of Tijuana to the east, removed from most pedestrian locations or places of interest. Travel to the site (Nido de las Águilas, one of the easternmost neighborhoods of Tijuana) involves bumpy unpaved roads through low-infrastructure communities and massive semi-truck depots. Upon arrival, it is up to the individual viewer how close they want to get to the bollard steel barrier between them and the Prototypes. Crossing the threshold, viewers who may be used to entering a museum in a processionary manner, ticket in hand now enter the long line along the bridge, passport ready. Once admitted, the viewer may note the gallery has undergone some recent remodeling, as it were. The installation peeks over the slatted bollard walls, a recent upgrade from the graffitied corrugated Vietnam-era landing pad that had been around since the '90s.

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For further reference on spatial looping and the U.S./ Mexico border, see: Francis Alÿs, "The Loop" (1997)

WHAT WE TALK ABOUT WHEN WE TALK ABOUT EXHIBITIONS

MAGA's BWP tour would find itself neatly fitting into the chronology of multinational events such as those held by in_Site, the San Diego/Tijuana binational art fair that was premised on the idea that viewers would be able to "peer" into each other's worlds (and thus subjectivities) through experiencing art objects such as a site specific large scale installations. The conditions of the region's political divide and proximity, confronted with the banality of international trade agreements invest the locality of these two border cities with a discursive urgency. Only here can the border dilemma really be worked out and articulated. Through the universal language of art, all bodies and sovereignties can participate. Amy Sara Carroll's critique of in_Site, in conversation with George Yúdice (*ReMex*, 261-264) points towards the long legacy of institutionalized art production in the borderlands, specifically Tijuana/San Diego. Following Carroll and Yúdice's critique, I am referring to this trend as the NAFTAfication.[33] The progression of in_Site is one which was in part born out of an urgency to communicate one reality of the Mexico-US border, as well as promote a model for transnational collaboration. Similarly, the North American Free Trade Agreement between the United States, Canada, and Mexico which came into effect in 1994, also sold itself as a collaborative effort through the exchange of commodities and sold one reality of border life.[34] What occurred, in one

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Carroll coins this term, and I use it here because I find it to be a useful descriptor and timestamp for conditions she critiques which I see has establishing the trends I examine in this thesis.

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Historical periodization of these projects is worth exploring in the future: 1992 in_Site; NAFTA 94; secure fence act 2006; last in_Site 2005; funding from MX side. Even though the NAFTA era may have closed, the legacy has remained.

sense, was that in_Site established the dominant genre of artistic practice in the region as installation. The binational events "in effect prototyp[ed] what would become a gathering of platforms for the subsequent institutionalization of border art regionally and internationally", swallowing itself to become a hybrid installation-institution.(Carroll, 256) Within this art historical context, recognizing the eight Border Wall Prototypes as a land art exhibition curated and created by State entities, is not amiss with the artistic institutions, government sponsorship, or art genres that have made their mark in San Diego/Tijuana.

Public rage and upset directed towards MAGA's petition and MCASD's distancing itself from the tours offered through MAGA, speak to the tendency of U.S. and international art institutions to conveniently work alongside and within neoliberal policies. MAGA exploits the way the art consumer has been trained to ignore this cooperation and conditioning of NAFTAfication in favor of the aesthetic. Illustrating this, PROTOTYPES, the land art exhibition, is presented within the aesthetic tradition that values recognizing the conventions of architectural photography and modernist art. MAGA's website contains a "Gallery" in which each of the prototypes is shown in isolation, with the same measurements and standards of typical, straight forward, architectural or minimalist photography. Each wall stands in isolation against the austere surroundings of the Otay Mesa's flattened earth and blue sky. Beneath each image is the name of the company that designed and built the prototype and the total cost in dollars. NASDAQ indexes under each prototype shift viewers away from what looks like the conventions of architectural photography and create a presentation more akin to seeing a

modernist art piece on live auction. Each index breaks down the number of shares and shareholders in each company that built a particular BWP in real time, the value of shares, and the current standing in the market. The global stock exchange mimetically recreates the kind of fluctuations of an art auction. The falseness of "Mexico will pay for the wall" rings even truer on the trading floor. In direct opposition to both the Trump campaign's claim that Mexico would pay for the wall and the long-standing GOP obsession with U.S. government not "wasting" taxpayer money, MAGA's NASDAQ Gallery presents the connections between the market and he products (BWP). Each prototype has shareholders that are able to profit off of the company awarded the contract to build it. There is a private market that benefits from the BWP. Claims that Büchel's collective is tone-deaf, offensive, attention seeking, scandalous, etc. perform an upset that enables the historical amnesia of the lonuge durée of border barriers. Respectability politics are distractions threatening a much more problematic decontextualization of the Mexico-U.S. border, its barriers, and border art history.

Fig. 2 View of three concrete prototypes. Image taken by author.

Fig. 3: View of two concrete prototypes though bollard fence. Image taken by author.

Fig.4: Steel bollards. Image taken by author.

My feet are sinking into the mud that has formed near the beams. I can easily see the concrete ditch that this bollard barrier is cemented in. From the look of it, I can tell that this barrier is neither too old or too new here. I know that people live here because the multiple one and two-story town houses lining the streets. These houses are between the barrier and a semi-truck depot. With the bollards as the limit to their backyard, many appear to be in various stages of upgrade: new roofs, new paint, gates with locks, the shell of an addition that's in process. There are old tires and masses of what appears to be shredded plastic (jugs? Water bottles?). There is the carcass of a teddy bear mixed in all the mass of junk, a shoe that has come undone at the seams to barely resemble anything that could properly be called a shoe. An intrepid rooster winding around the shade and

sun of the beams catches my eye. Looking through the slats, I notice two street dogs running around the massive slabs I cannot walk up to. Are they American? If not, are they illegal dogs? I have no doubt that the dogs are able to access a freedom in this moment that many who have come to Tijuana would be criminalized, jailed, or even killed for even daring to touch.

Trump's administration has stressed the need for the barriers to be "see through," claiming that this is a way to ensure CBP officers' security from whatever may be hidden behind the other side. While I lean against the oxidized bollard looking at these 30 x 25-foot blocks, they appear like giant tombstones. I can see the very top of the six-foot ditch, a concrete anchor that takes the international boundary to its grave. Just like old cemeteries, nobody is here. There are just the people who live nearby, and they are all inside. No matter what is put up here, life will go on like it always has here: pockmarked by the glimpses you can catch of an empty space where your dog can run, but you cannot pass. In the following chapter, I extend the ideas of panoptic preoccupation and nepantla through the premise of a threshold in order to consider the proximity between the embodied and spatial dimensions of the BWP. I then take two case studies to examine the intersections between representations of the border that invoke the "Border Wall".

CHAPTER 3: DISPOSITIONS IN THE DESERT

The desire to see around, over, under, and through the border has been explored in recognized artistic productions such as Richard Lou's "Border Door" (1988), Valeska Soares "Picturing Paradise (Visualizando el Paraíso)" (2000), Teresa Margolles' "Muro Baleado" (2009) and Sterling Ruby's "Specter" (2019). In the previous chapter, I theorize the similar desire to see through the border on behalf of the State as a panoptic preoccupation. This chapter focuses on the intersection of barriers as infrastructure and as aesthetic forms in the context of the U.S./Mexico border. The foundation of the argument that I have been threading in this thesis recognizes land art as referring to large-scale site-specific installation that intentionally utilizes the surrounding environment as part of the aesthetic production. While this thesis does not go into detailing the trends of the art world, I focus on land art due to its long-standing presence in binational art fairs and biennials such as In_Site and Desert X. Both of these biennales are projects that have provided high visibility for land art. Understanding Desert X as a continued iteration of In_Site 's model further aides in reading the BWP as land art.

Maintaining that structures, as evidence of Taylorian archives, implicitly enact performance dimensions (Taylor's repertoire), this chapter grounds itself in the architectural and infrastructural evidence of a State spatial imaginary of the US/Mexico border used to reinforce the dominant, Wild West border scenario theorized in the previous chapter. I further link this weaponization of the border's built (and natural) environment to the ways land art's legibility capitalizes on the discursive implications of

the border's built environment. Through reading the disposition (a term taken from architect Keller Easterling and which I explain further in this chapter) of the border's infrastructure space, I am able to argue how land art's legibility extends to the Border Wall Prototypes as a site specific land art exhibition, further illuminating the ways in which the art object— especially in the context of the US/Mexico border— must be complicated beyond utopian rhetoric naïvely aiming to "heal", "come together", and forge "unity".

While well-intentioned, many of these projects dehistoricize and abstractly gloss over the way life is contained on the border. This genre includes projects such as 2018 British led project "Reflect a Ray of Hope," in which 100 people (50 US, 50 Mexican) wearing a mirror mask and spaced 10 feet apart to form a kilometer border line intersecting with a border barrier, creating an intersecting line comprised of solar flashes. Similarly, French artist JR's large-scale photographic installations, notably the image of a Dreamer's (undocumented youth enrolled under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals' program) eyes turned into a border crossing picnic table. A sentimental action, explained as creating a moment of binational unity to "tell a story about our shared humanity".[35] Presenting these projects as solutions or grand interventions treats the international line as if it had no other attached political, ideological or infrastructural ramifications or dimensions. Events that act as symbolic moments that allow for a

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Alter, Charlotte. "A Picnic at the Border." *Time*, Time, 12 Oct. 2017, time.com/4979252/lightbox-picnic-at-the-border/.

"forgetting" of the border's constructed dimensions, while cathartic, erase complexity. Using the BWP as a theoretical springboard, I both counter this trend in reading border art events as inherently utopian and apply the BWP as a lens from which to examine Sterling Ruby's "Specter" (part of Desert X's 2019 showcase). The BWP themselves have a corresponding discourse: they are evidence of the promise for a big, beautiful wall that Mexico, audiences were told, would pay for. The criteria provided by the then-President-elect's rhetorical construction are essentially design guidelines that circle back onto the inanest forms of land art, such that size and aesthetics ("beauty") become the two most valued means by which to determine the raison d'être of both art installations and government technologies. I use Keller Easterling's writings on infrastructure space to contour how these aesthetic projects in the desert represent the chaotic elements of the Anzaldúan nepantla scenario discussed in the previous chapter.

Macarena Gómez-Barris, in *Beyond the Pink Tide: Art and Political Undercurrents in the Americas,* frames installations by indigenous art collective Post-Commodity as operating in a critique of gore capitalism. Coined by Sayek Valencia, Gómez-Barris describes gore capitalism as an extension of Achille Mbembe's figuration of necropolitics (the state's arbitration of who lives and dies), to refer to the "gendered and violent experience of frontier capitalism [to address] state and extralegal power where particular bodies such as migrants, sex workers, and maquila workers are disposed of by a capitalist machine that extracts value by exploiting their labor." (73)

Estudio 3.14 (Pi), an architecture firm based in Guadalajara, collaborated with the University of Connecticut's Mamertine Group[36] to design a border wall project that captured the "perverse politics and megalomania"[37] of the Trump administration's touting of a "big, beautiful wall." Gore capitalism,[38] Gómez-Barris elucidates, draws on Anzaldúan formulations and recognitions of *la herida abierta*: the border is the geographical center in which various campaigns of settler colonialism and empire play out. The expansionary projects of European, Mexican, and United States territorial aspiration commingle at the U.S./Mexico border, all of which relied up the extractive potency of indigenous displacement and chattel slavery.

As evidence of an archive used to reify the corresponding repertoire of the Wild West scenario, border barriers possess both the properties of the archive and repertoire. While a rhetorical wall may exist ideologically, it comes into material, physical existence when it is erected and through the legislative process. This is only one way in which the discourse and the materiality of the "Border Wall" exist in embodied acts. Definitionally, barriers only have meaning when they hinder movement. As such, the barriers are seen as effective solutions because they have been able to affect mobility, as was proven in the

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Estudio 3.14 describes itself as a group of related architects, designers, sociologists, and urbanists. The Mamertine Group, notably named after the Mamertine Prison in Rome, is an experimental design lab that seeks to "intervene in state projects that implicate architecture in the political imaginary, relating monumental form to questions of sovereignty, citizenship, culture, and history."

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I am a native Spanish speaker and all translations are my own.

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"Capitalismo Gore" underlines violence that undergirds these economic systems. While ten years may seem dated, people continue to die as a result of neoliberalism.

displacement of unauthorized movement across the international boundary through actions such as Operation Gatekeeper at San Diego/Tijuana and Operation Blockade/ Hold-the-Line in El Paso/Juárez.[39] This displacement pushed migrants further down the line, into the Sonoran Desert. In other words, the political border was embodied through the attempts to cross and the ensuing displacement. Gore capitalism allows us to approach infrastructural artifacts within the context of the exploitation they enforce and traffic in. Taking this to its most literal extreme, Estudio Pi and the Mamertine Group's mockup of a border wall exposes the wounds created by exclusionary geographies while also immediately addressing the systems of extraction the State requires to maintain claims of denial or access. I have come to think of these additional processes as festering— and expression of rot, decay, and the threat of death in the desert.

POINT OF ENTRY

Migrants who have already made onerous treks, often across the entire Mexican Republic and sometimes even further distances, have been displaced along the border where they are forced into dangerous desert terrain. Many do not survive.[40] One of the

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See: Timothy Dunn, "Operation Blockade/Hold-the-Line: The Border Patrol Reasserts Control," in *Blockading the Border and Human Rights: The El Paso Operation that Remade Immigration Enforcement* (University of Texas Press, 2009), pp. 51-96.
Joseph Nevins, "The Bounding of the United States and the Emergence of Operation Gatekeeper," in *Operation Gatekeeper: The Rise of the "Illegal Alien" and the Making of the U.S.-Mexico Boundary* (Routledge, 2002), pp. 61-94.

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The rates of migrant mortality have been extensively documented by many scholars and artists. For further reading on the weaponization of the landscape, see: Jason De León, "Necroviolence," in The Land of Open Graves: Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail (University of California Press, 2015), pp. 62-85.

tactics employed by the Border Patrol that speaks to a gross literalization of the way in which the desert is symbolically smoothed to create a landscape of nothingness, enabling the State's necropolitics is dragging. Using old tires tied to the back of their white and green patrol vans, the Border Patrol drives through the desert in order to facilitate spotting migrants through aerial surveillance. Dragging makes footsteps, and people walking easier to spot from above. This tactic of literal smoothing visually reinforces the notion of the desert as barren, deceptively defenseless and in need of something to organize the overwhelming spatial vastness that lends itself to chaos. Further, it obfuscates the larger system of border policing, hiding death in the desert through the displacing effects of physical barriers to weaponize the border's built and natural environment. This overwhelming manufactured nothingness as the backdrop in the Wild West scenario is pivoted against the starkness of a wall.

Contrary to popular discourse, the border barriers are not meant to actually stop crossing or immigration. Rather, they are designed to slow down crossers' movements, making apprehension along the patrol roads faster and more frequent. The fences are considered force multipliers. Such a classification refers to any kind of infrastructure, technology, or tool used to increase the capabilities of a single person. Force multipliers range from binoculars, night vision goggles and fog lights, to fencing. In other terms: the use of border barriers that force stopping and dictate a change in movement creates a threshold. A threshold is the point that marks crossing, specifically entering. In brief, "[w]hen architecture supports the acting out of a ritual by framing the human action, it assists the establishment of a significant space." Furthermore, "...the steps of the

ritualized procession...give each step a "place," thereby articulating the parts or aspects of the rituals we enact whenever we cross a boundary."[41] But where does this transitional space occur within the State's border imaginary? What is its range and what happens there? In the Department of Homeland Security's imagined border geography, the international line is composed of a series of stacked zones.

The actual international border is marked by obelisks that were placed in a binational survey that arose as part of the conditions of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848. These obelisks dot the border in what could be considered "the line." From here, there is a buffer: the patrol road. The patrol road is within the territory of the United States and is a road that is heavily surveilled and patrolled by Customs and Border Patrol. This road cradles the border barrier on both sides. Where the device of the border barrier is an apparatus of spatial and political separation, it is also a device that constructs and maintains the ritual of crossing. Definitionally, borders constitute and straddle spaces of containment and of release. The line implies isolation, exclusion, limits. This implication is performed, secured and enforced with every monitored entry and exit process. Lines are strictly marked, and where they are not or where the line can be questioned, an anxiety to contain the border manifests as a need to safeguard national sovereignty. Control of the border is seen as a requisite condition to maintain a larger bounded whole. In order to enforce contain and ritualized crossing, passing is negotiated through the line's capacity as a threshold. The following section reviews a collaborative proposal by

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This is taken from T*he Institutional and Ideological Aspects of Architecture*, part five: Structuring Space: Boundaries and Thresholds, an online source from the University of Maryland.

Guadalajara based architecture firm Estudio 3.14 (Pi) and the Mamertine Group, an experimental design lab based out of the University of Connecticut. Their design aims to balance the ultimate threshold of the U.S./Mexico border through the architectural solution provided in a wall. The section immediately following focuses on American sculptor Sterling Ruby's monolithic installation in the 2019 land art biennale Desert X, which conjures the features of large scale infrastructure exemplified by Border Wall Prototypes, as well as the architectural solutions supplied by the Estudio Pi/Mamertine Group collaboration.

Most obvious to the eye is how both projects use color. Their palettes are remarkably strident and atypical, at least for the U.S.'s visual palette. The proposal from Estudio Pi/Mamertine intentionally sets out to evoke Luis Barragán, the most well-known Mexican architect (also from Guadalajara) largely considered the father of modernist Mexican architecture. Unmistakable in hue, their project is almost entirely shrouded in bright *rosa mexicano*. Sterling Ruby's shade of orange follows this preference for the loud in the form of hyper fluorescent shade that is almost impossible to capture in a photograph[42]. Where one project openly frames itself in the in terms set by the Trump administration's desire for a "beautiful wall," the other uses a similar strategy of pigment to call attention to itself, creating a self-contained visual boundary that looms over the

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Mellin, Haley. "Sterling Ruby's 'SPECTER' Is So Bright, Even Your IPhone Can't Properly Capture It." *Garage*, VICE, 13 Feb. 2019, garage.vice.com/en_us/article/8xy8mz/specter.

imagination without directly referencing the architectural phantoms its presence raises in the desert.

IMMANENT DISPOSITIONS: IMAGINED ZONES, REAL CROSSINGS

Strangely unavoidable while being entirely avoided, architecture "provides... space for… ritual to be performed."[43] Zeroing in on the urbanity of the U.S./ Mexico border region, in particular cities like Tijuana or Ciudad Juárez, architect Keller Easterling describes the proliferation of what she terms "the zone."[44] As an infrastructural space, the zone has global iterations, however, no matter its locality, the zone is both the "germ of a city-building epidemic that reproduces glittering mimics" of mega cities (she cites Dubai, Singapore, Hong Kong— all finance and trade capital behemoths), a "corporate enclave... offering a 'clean slate' and a 'one-stop' entry into the economy of a foreign country." (26). The zone is marked by a mixture of "ecstatic expressions of urbanity with a complex and sometimes violent form of lawlessness." (26) Easterling specifically sites the labor abuses that occur in sweatshops, dormitories, and labor sites. In this way, Easterling provides for the architectural anchor to Sayek Valencia's theorizations of gore capitalism as they occur in the neoliberal stacking of the industrial urbanity of the U.S./Mexico border. This is further proved by Easterling's observation that the zone desperately seeks to cast itself as apolitical but is "often a powerful political

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The Institutional and Ideological Aspects of Architecture, part five: Structuring Space: Boundaries and Thresholds. Online source from the University of Maryland.

44

Easterling, Keller. *Extrastatecraft: the Power of Infrastructure Space*. Verso, 2016.

pawn." Due to the zone's bargaining power, she characterizes it as a "crucible of irrationality and fantasy" understanding it as an "instrument of economic liberalism, [trading] state bureaucracy for even more complex layers of extrastate governance, market manipulation, and regulation." (27) To speak of the zone in the context of the US/Mexico border, Easterling astutely notes the inauguration of the Border Industrial Program (BIP) in 1964 coincided with the closing of the Bracero Program (opened in 1942).

The BIP allowed for the proliferation of foreign companies to own and operate maquiladoras within a 20-mile strip along the border. It is worth noting that this zone is the commercial reflection of the policing dynamics that occur on the U.S. side of the border. Under the Immigration and Nationality Act (1952) section 287 (also copied into section 8 of the Federal Code of regulations), the border patrol may inspect anyone without a warrant within 100 air miles of the any border.[45] The Immigration and Nationality Act has been continually expanded and cited as the source of authority by CBP to police of bodies. The INA was also cited by President Trump's Executive Order 13767, which secured the funding and contracts to create the BWP. The barrier is a line that stretches into zones of exclusion and exploitation, strategies of statecraft that allow the bordering nations to camouflage their violence, "a place of secrets, hyper-control, and segregation." (67).

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"Legal Authority for the Border Patrol." *Customs and Border Patrol*, 28 July 2018, help.cbp.gov/app/answers/detail/a_id/1084/~/legal-authority-for-the-border-patrol.

Important to Easterling's treaty of infrastructure space is her concept of extrastatecraft to refer to the undisclosed and often unobserved processes set in motion by infrastructure spaces and state making actors (international corporations, NGOs). In partnership with statecraft, these enterprises are manipulators of space and standards, operating in spaces that abstract and separate them physically from the nations they are extensions of, as well as the regulations that could oversee them. There is no question that the U.S./Mexico border region's infrastructure space is a key example of Easterling's formulation of extrastatecraft. As a tool to read infrastructure space's compliance with extrastatecraft actors, Easterling argues for analyzing the disposition of structure. She opens by illustrating how ripples made on the surface of water by a steam boat, are the result of movements that occur underneath, revealing the hidden motor that changes the flow of water. Easterling elaborates, using the analogy of a ball on an incline with the potential to move, she notes that the ball does not have to move in order to have the capacity to do so. Thus, "physical objects in spatial arrangements, however static, also possess an agency that resides in the relative position. Disposition is immanent, not in the moving parts, but in the relationships between the components." (73) Describing disposition as a diagnostic, it "uncovers accidental, covert, or stubborn forms of power—political chemistries and temperaments of aggression, submission, or violence— in the folds of infrastructure space." (73)

Returning to the concept of a threshold, the border's relationship to the body activates its disposition in the ritual of crossing. The extrastatecraft operations are revealed in the embodied interface with the spatial. As disposition "usually describes a

tendency, activity, faculty, or property in either beings or objects— a propensity with a context." (Easterling,72) on the US/Mexico border, the dispositions of each side's built environment reflect the violent tendencies and activities that characterize intimately connected transnational State violence in the region. Returning to Anzaldúa's nepantla in conjunction with Easterling, we can understand what Anzaldúa describes as the in-betweenness of borderlands— the "bleeding" of the open wound that creates a hybrid culture and place— to be the disposition of U.S./ Mexico border's zones. The chaotic and destructive capacities of this nepantla can be more easily detected using disposition. Taking these potential futures of violence to the dispositional extreme is Estudio Pi/Mamertine Group's design, which I reference as El Muro Rosa for reasons I will elaborate on further down.

The Mamertine Group's website houses the detailed explanations (including feasibility and sustainability of the project) while Estudio Pi created the renderings and provides a sense of how the "Border Wall" is articulated from the Mexican imaginary.[46] Imagined as a permanent barrier that stretches the entire 1,950 miles of the international boundary between the U.S. and Mexico, El Muro Rosa takes the hybrid economic, industrial, and policing zones of the border and synthesizes them into one architectural container. El Muro Rosa is both a city that includes "shopping, health care, residences for prison staff, and other facilities required to sustain life, [and an] impenetrable prison-

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Of note is Estudio Pi's location in Guadalajara, Jalisco. With a long history of a powerful centralized government, most narratives of the Mexican nation prioritize experiences from Mexico City. Intriguingly, Guadalajara, while being one of the country's largest and oldest metropolitan centers, is neither the nation's capital or border city, nor is it the capital's northern rival city of Monterrey.

wall" designed to "house, process, and assimilate or remove approximately 11 million undocumented foreign nationals."[47] Briefly stated, the structure "underwrit[es] the integrity and sovereignty of the United States, duplicat[ing] the nation it protects from the outside." Descriptions mimic the restrictionist language often touted by political talking heads:

> The architecture of the prison-wall must reflect that a border literally does not take place, marking a purely notional "horizon" between two abutting territories. Built on the territory of the Republic of Mexico, such that the inside face of the wall runs along the outermost possible edge of the territory of the United States, the prison-wall will nonetheless materialize the border of the United States of America, demarcating without infringing upon its sovereign space.

We can here see that the design is aware of the ways that architecture is an instrument for the creation and production of ritual by organizing possibility within a given space as well as the acknowledgement that in order for the border to have meaning, it must trigger the ritual of crossing. This is done by designing the wall to straddle the line, "demarcating but not infringing." In this sense, it is the very proximity of the Mexico that trips the border into manifestation as the limit of U.S. "sovereign space." Estudio Pi, the Mexican firm which created the renderings for the project, explains its compliance with the Trump campaign's demands for a "big, fat, beautiful wall"[48] with nationalist flair:

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Ladha, Hassanaly. "Prison-Wall." *Mamertine Group*, 9 Nov 2016. www.mamertinegroup.com/prison-wall.html.

48

Mr. Trump said the following to a crowd in San Jose: "It's going to be a big, fat, beautiful wall!" Mascaro, Lisa. "'It's Going to Be a Big, Fat, Beautiful Wall!': Trump's Words Make His California Climb an Even Steeper Trek." *Los Angeles Times*, Los Angeles Times, 3 June 2016, www.latimes.com/politics/la-na-pol-trump-california-campaign-20160602-snap-story.html.

> Como el muro debe ser bello, según las palabras del candidato republicano, nos hemos inspirado por los muros rosas de Luis Barragán, por la relevancia que tienen en la arquitectura mexicana. evocando así la tradición arquitectónica mexicana y su relación con la perversidad política y la megalomanía.
>
> As the wall must be beautiful, according to the words of the republican candidate, we have been inspired by the pink walls of Luis Barragán, for the relevance that they have with Mexican architecture. Evoking in this way the tradition of Mexican architecture and its relationship with political perversity and megalomania.

The statement from the studio draws a connection between Mexican architectural traditions, aesthetics, as well as "perversidad política y la megalomanía." By doing so, the firm implicates the Mexican State in the dynamics of violence the wall's disposition reveals. Further in the statement, the studio enumerates its goals:

> Nuestros intereses son primeramente, tener un proyecto que permita al público general imaginar de una manera literal la hermosa monstruosidad propuesta por Trump. Segundo es tener un elemento arquitectónico al centro del debate nacional, permitiéndonos probar el potencial o el límite de las imágenes arquitectónicas entre las masas y en medios sociales. Y finalmente revelar la operación en la que el lenguaje, como un instrumento del pensamiento, delinea referentes en el espacio y tiempo.[49]
>
> Our interests are firstly, to have a project that permits the general public to imagine in a literal way the beautiful monstrosity proposed by Trump. Secondly is to have an architectonic element at the center of national debate, allowing us to test the potential or limit of architectural images between the masses and social mediums. Lastly, to reveal the operation in which language, as an instrument of thought, outlines referents in space and time.

By using a visual language associated with Barragán, the prison-wall brokers with the aesthetic tradition of modernist architecture (clean lines, simplicity of form, minimal

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Both excerpts from: "El Muro Rosa De Trump." *Estudio 3.14*, 27 March 2018, e314.mx/portfolio/muro-trump-prison-wall/.

ornamentation, abstraction, rational geometric from). Recognizing that aesthetics provide the wall legibility as a modernist architectural form, the collaborative project has streamlined processes that occur within the industrial and economic sectors of the zone's function as an urban germ and carceral priorities of the Border Patrol into the abstractions of provided by modernist architectural legacies. I chose to refer to this project as El Muro Rosa to play off of the modernism's aesthetic capacity to conceal the violence engineered and espoused by both nations in their collaborative schemes of statecraft. El Muro Rosa is not a leap in its design proposal but rather an acknowledgement of multiple processes of exploitation, domination, oppression that coalesce in a single architectural solution.

The Trump administration has a deep investment in what I have called a panoptic preoccupation: an obsessive tendency to focus on the need or desire to see into a foreign nation, rationalizing such surveillance as a necessary bulwark of national security. His desire for a "see-through" barrier is a discursive trait associated with his administration further concretized by the Border Wall Prototypes, but is in no way unique to this moment. The kind of porosity granted by visual control is expressed materially, economically, legislatively. El Muro Rosa keenly captures these realities in designing a continuous prison wall that is also a "self-sufficient" city wherein none of these functions are spared.

> But it's as an encounter in the desert that its mystery comes alive. Here the glowing orange acts as a giant redaction, a pictorial hole burnt into the landscape that transforms the familiar into something strange and surreal.
>
> - Neville Wakefield, artistic director for Desert X

In a brief article published in Garage, Vice News' design magazine, Desert X's artistic director Neville Wakefield is credited with stating that one of the goals of the biennale is to "embrace a range of ecological, environmental, and social issues that have been driving conversations about our role in the Anthropocene.' "[50] The 2019 showcase is the second iteration of the biennale, having held its first iteration in the same location in 2017. Expanded from the previous biennale, the area sprawls over "300 square miles of land, equivalent to the size of greater Los Angeles. The program is scattered across the Coachella Valley, literally using the area as the backdrop and site of "a wide terrain for the works that extends south from Palm Springs to the Salton Sea and the U.S./ Mexico Border."

The biennale is sponsored by the cities of Palm Springs, Coachella, and corporate entities such as UGG, as well as vast sums from private donors. And perhaps it is because of this reason that most of the information that introduces a piece is nothing more than a paragraph, anonymously posted alongside a map and a few images on the Desert X website. One could ask many questions about the conditions that allow for a land art

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Mellin, Haley. "Sterling Ruby's 'SPECTER' Is So Bright, Even Your IPhone Can't Properly Capture It." *Garage*, VICE, 13 Feb. 2019, garage.vice.com/en_us/article/8xy8mz/specter.

biennale to materialize to begin with, curatorial choices, what the curators classify as land art. Central to this thesis is how we can understand something like Desert X as working within a larger history of large scale art exhibitions in the border region. To adequately do such a comparison is beyond the scope of this essay. However, there is room to visit one piece of Desert X's 2019 program: Sterling Ruby's "Specter". Wakefield and others have referred to this work as an "orange monolith" with that creates an "erratic presence" in the desert. Standing at 8 ft x 20 ft x 8ft, the rectangle is easily visually imposing. I argue that what "Specter" gains much of its legibility from the Border Wall Prototypes, and visually evokes the rhetorical "Border Wall". Desert X's claims to embrace a broad host of political issues fall apart when closely examined, crumbling to reveal a project that conditions the kind of NAFTAfication that became part of other large biennales such as in_Site.

The Desert X 2019 podcast, hosted by Frances Anderton, provides around 30-minute interviews with each of the artists in the biennale's program. Anderton is the longtime host of DnA (an acronym for design and architecture), a podcast which focuses on design and urbanism trends from the vantage point of Los Angeles. Anderton's persona lends the Desert X podcast a level of credibility that would normally derive from outside arts institution backing, something which the organization glaringly lacks, aside from the previous affiliations of its artists, curators and artistic director. Needless to say, this has not proven to be an issue for the biennale to call attention to itself. Each episode begins with a brief introduction about where the pieces are located, followed by a design focused conversation between Anderton and artist, occasionally peppered with comments

by curators or artistic director Neville Wakefield, and a reminder that the show is accessible to all in the Coachella Valley.

In the episode dedicated to Sterling Ruby, Anderton's unmistakably British cadence lilts, as she tells listeners that to get to "Specter", one has to exit the 10 freeway, get onto highway 111, cross rail tracks, traverse a barren dirt area, until they come across the site where "looming behind [Specter] is Mount San Jacinto" (pronounced Ya-cinto). Sterling Ruby's work is put alongside that of John McCracken, the American minimalist and abstract expressionist sculptor known for his brightly colored beams and planks, the Finish Fetish movement that is deeply associated with Los Angeles, and Kubrick's intelligent object epitomized by HAL in *2001: A Space Odyssey*.

Anderton repeatedly refers to the object as a "kind of beacon": the "bright orange monolith" sits calmly, attracting people to it. Referring to it as a "glowing box," she describes her visit as feeling "like a pilgrimage for art." The idea of pilgrimage is one that is central to the Desert X marketing scheme: come to the holy land of site specific art that is the Coachella Valley, witness said art, leave enlightened and maybe a bit dusty. By framing the object in this way, they coordinate their rhetoric to revive past desert scenarios: the wandering figure that must cross the desert for absolution, the long and winding trek to get to the point where our suffering and sacrifice will mark our souls with moral and spiritual meaning. At the center of the installation's spiritual pull is the heavy emphasis on Ruby's development of color: a bright, fluorescent orange that makes it difficult to photograph and gives the appearance that it has been photoshopped (according to Wakefield).

Fig. 5: Desert X Palm Spring promotional photograph. Cropped screenshot. March 2019.

Ruby himself furthers this idea, saying he was attracted to the idea of going from one place to another. However, he uses logistics as the determining factor in the placement of "Specter", emphasizing his desire to have the mountains in the background, using the natural landscape as a way to balance scale. In a brief exchange about what the object might be, Anderton asks: "Is it a shipping container?" Promptly, Ruby elucidates:

> It's not. You know, there were scenarios we were thinking of in regard to form, and I think that rectangular form is closely related to things that we might experience in the desert whether or not that's a train that's going by, whether or not that's a shipping container, whether or not that's an RV… there were

> definitely plays and different choices that I was making based on what kind of forms you might already know and what kind of expectations are of experiencing a different form in that shape, size but in a different color or material...as a kind of starting point ...some uncanny resemblance to something else or whether or not is is completely related to something else.

To echo Ruby, whether or not his vagueness is purposefully tailored to align with Desert X's posturing, it is clear that the ways in which "Specter" signal the everyday barriers we are accustomed with rely heavily on the combined use of color and the skirting of the most obvious of rectangular forms we might encounter in the desert in the form of border barriers. MAGA's understanding of the BWP engages the same visual language of minimalist art, the ready-made, and abstraction which are exemplified by works such as "Specter". Further, the framing of Desert X as a biennale that seeks to "embrace a range of ecological, environmental, and social issues that have been driving conversations about our role in the Anthropocene" as Wakefield claims, uses a rhetoric that recalls presentist anxieties but in effect skirts contemporary political debate.

The range of issues the pieces may reanimate in the Valley belies how the organization is a product of NAFTAfication. Akin to the way the fall of the Berlin Wall has been symbolic in determining the era of a free and unified Europe, NAFTA symbolizes the era of increased free trade, border policing, and industrial extractive labor zones along the U.S./Mexico divide in the late twentieth century and early 21st. In 2019, "[u]nmoored from the official date of its advent, [NAFTA corresponds] to a socioeconomic reconfiguration of the Mexico- US subcontinent that profoundly impacted the aesthetic and political unconscious of the region." (Carroll, 313) An inheritor these

conditions, Desert X, much like in_Site, seeks to create cultural vantage points from which to reassess one's point of view in contemporary U.S. society through site specific land art installation. While in_Site was open about its binational aims and priorities, Desert X has attempted to veil itself under the category of the anthropocene. A trendy neologism used to describe the era in which human activity has so shaped the earth's climate and environment, and defines the current geological age, Wakefield uses the anthropocene as a timestamp that separates the ecological, environmental and the social, however all three are intimately connected. Within this categorization of concepts, the works in the 2019 program are neatly stacked, responding and corresponding to issues that have been severed from related dynamics, tensions, implications, and formations. Refiguring the optics of these muted relationships, "Specter" is presented as little more than installation:

> Sterling Ruby's fluorescent orange monolith, SPECTER, appears as an apparition in the desert. The bright, geometric sculpture creates a jarring optical illusion, resembling a Photoshopped composite or collage, as if something has been removed or erased from the landscape. The block acts as a cipher or stand-in, mimicking the form it could be — a shipping container, a military bunker, an unidentified object an abandoned homestead. Fluorescent orange is traditionally used for safety, as a warning. Here that logic is reversed: a ghostly object, set apart from the natural environment, hiding in plain sight.[51]

The use of the desert landscape as backdrop is a commodifying act that is not new to the area. The city of Palm Springs, a sponsor of Desert X, is known for its mid-century

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"STERLING RUBY." *Desert X*, www.desertx.org/sterlingruby.

modern houses[52] by star architects such as Albert Frey, Donald Wexler, and Richard Neutra, among others whose designs contributed to what has been called Desert Modernism. Devotees of the aesthetic need only download an app to track their progress as they visit each site along their pilgrimage in the modernist mecca. Indigenous art collective Post-Commodity centered their installation within this existing architectural ecosystem: their contribution to the show case, titled "It Exists in Many Forms" literally reverberates within the iconic "Wave House" designed by Walter S. White, whose work is considered iconic of Palm Springs' aesthetic.[53]

Initially an "apparition", the fluorescent geometry of the sculpture morphs into a "cipher": as if the relationship between the brightness of hue itself overtakes the borders of the object. I understand "jarring" to be the strident quality of the safety orange over the rectangle that allows "Specter" to "[mimic] the form it could be — a shipping container, a military bunker, an unidentified object an abandoned homestead." It is a container, and Wakefield is not amiss to correlate containment with spectrality: we put our dead in rectangular containers too. The ghostly intonations of "Specter" for me, have more to do with the ways in which both commodities, such as goods like food or cheaply produced

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Indigenous art collective Post Commodity member Cristobal Martinez describes this part of the Coachella Valley as "dystopic ecologies," citing the cognitive dissonance of mid-century modern architecture , and its associated ideals, that simultaneously objectify the desert. Tourists flock to see mid-century modern homes, which have often been praised for their framing of the desert as a source of inspiration, a relationship Martinez considers a dissonance of the multiple millions of dollars of investment that gobble up the land unconscionably. In this sense, Post Commodity's sound installation titled "It Exists in Many Forms" is a sonic foil to "Specter."

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California's Travel and Tourism Commission website (Visit California) features a wave design reminiscent of the Wave House's iconic roof.

homewares, sneakers, etc. that are shipped in the kinds of crates the dimensions of Ruby's installation recalls. Further, the bodies whose labor is detached from those same commodities is alarmingly silent in this stretch of California— despite being one of the most highly demanded commodities of the state's agricultural sector.

Anderton, in her interview of with Ruby, describes the area around "Specter" as almost resembling something that "might belong to the military industrial complex." This description is not far off from the mention that the shape could be a military bunker. However specific the references may seem, they actually function vaguely, displacing the site specificity to recall a distant war zone: Iraq or Afghanistan, perhaps Syria— but not the militarized border zone only a three-hour drive south to San Diego. Specter is not just intentionally "set apart from the natural environment" but set apart from the immediate political environment. I again find myself agreeing with Wakefield's assertion that while "[f]luorescent orange is traditionally used for safety, as a warning ...that logic is reversed [to create] a ghostly object." I also agree with Wakefield's assessment that the cautionary logic implied by the orange is reversed, evident by the audience's attraction to the object as opposed to an alarm that would drive a viewer away. The orange is one Ruby identifies as "always, always associated with hunting orange," a color that communicates intended action and also has deep associative ties: construction, road work, safety, incarceration. "Safety" as an institutional color, signals a disposition of containment. The logic of color communicates a series of potential relationships, a series of choices without suggestion. Turn left, turn right, stop, come, watch out, hands behind your head, the earth quaking report of a rifle. Ghosts have clear relationships, but "Specter" is more of a

living-dead object: we can recognize what it could be, and at the same time cannot fully recognize it. In the words of Ruby: the color "doesn't register."

Containment is the connecting vector between the BWP, El Muro Rosa, and the ghostly "Specter." Modernism's tropes— clean lines, geometric shapes, everyday materials— and the tradition of land art summarize the vastness of desert landscape into a background. In short, the object itself becomes a vacuum, creating a bordering of the surroundings to create a visual container in order to bring itself into focus. The leap from "beautiful" to "jarring" rests in the disposition of containment implied on the U.S. side of the barrier. The "optical illusion" is ultimately what Desert X desperately seeks to hide in plain sight, as if by grafting itself into the Coachella Valley camouflages the biennale's commodification of the landscape. The truth is that at no point is Desert X interested or invested in separating itself with the neoliberal ecology of NAFTAfication: it exists because of and to promote the kind of kaleidoscopic refraction of appropriative flattening that the sentimental rhetoric of "erasing borders" enables. This is, quoting Amy Sara Carroll, a "bold yet banal observation that NAFTA, a rhetorical palimpsest, represented and still resonates as the most fantastical inter-American allegory of millennial and millenarian globalization." (313)

It is very easy to understand Desert X's casting of "Specter" (and by extension Wakefield's reading) as a ghostly, or alien and erratic presence as an exercise in the kind of aggressive marketing often joked about social-media advertising trends. Desert X is aesthetically conceived of as being very Instagramable. This acknowledgement, however, cannot account for the entire conceit of the desert biennale nor for the amount of effort

that has been put into carefully avoiding the sculpture's most obvious visual referent in the desert landscape or in representational imaginary: the big, beautiful "Border Wall". Perhaps more sophisticated than border barriers, "Specter" smooths the desert by swallowing it into a self-reflective vortex, creating a relationship in which the eye cannot penetrate the spectral glow. Looking at it only furthers one's awareness that it is impenetrable: no matter what the angle, the box is the focus of one's attention, an interruption on the landscape that literally contains by restraining panoptic flight to its immediate surroundings. In this sense, the sculpture actively haunts: it does not leave, but rather suspends us and lingers. The legibility of Ruby's installation derives from the aesthetic norms of modernism which MAGA astutely capitalized on to classify the Border Wall Prototypes discussed in the first and second chapters of this thesis. As a sort of serendipitous hybrid of artistic and architectural convention, El Muro Rosa's aesthetic strategy melds both visual languages in its design renderings. Notably, El Muro Rosa exists as a direct response to the rhetorical discussion promoted by the long-standing xenophobia of the United States, connections between industrialization, exploitation, and incarceration, and the continued expansion of corporate power shaped by NAFTA's economic rebordering. It is a tongue-in-cheek project meant to highlight the intense proximity of globalization's lauded economic expansion in the form of free trade and consumer zones and corresponding forms of violent bodily exploitation that contribute to the hybrid nature of the U.S./Mexico border. The BWP and "Specter", however, are very real border-making events balanced on a tightrope El Muro Rosa builds on. All three of these examples are mired in a border scenario that they in turn either reflect or reproduce.

In stark contrast however, El Muro Rosa, and the BWP as mockups and prototypes call attention to the realities and political conditions the framing of "Specter" does not even dare approach.

On February 27, 2019 a demolition crew began to take down the Border Wall Prototypes in the Otay Mesa. In two hours, seven had been knocked down by a hydraulic jackhammer. By March 1st, all eight had been demolished. In about two days, what had been a land art exhibition became a durational performance. The orchestrated tear down's ephemeral nature was poorly translated by officials. The New York and LA Times, reporting directly from Customs and Border Patrol, explained that the BWP were torn down to make room for a secondary border barrier and had simply served their purpose, having taught the agency what it needed to know. "Specter" meanwhile, is an imagined figure that has not or is not fully materialized. It sits in the desert, like a traffic cone redirecting your eye around it. Not this way, maybe this way. The gaze is caught up, tugging at the sides of the block. Panoptic preoccupations divert us for a minute, having us look another way, always taunting or teasing us, like the gaps between each bollard, barrier, or block that tease of a wall to come. Which design will win? Which one is the prettiest? Which one is your favorite?

Concluding Statement: Standing in Otay

> "It takes a great deal of time and thought to install work carefully. This should not always be thrown away. Most art is fragile and some should be placed and never moved again. Instead of causing us to remember the past like the old monuments, the new monuments seem to cause us to forget the future."
>
> -MAGA Mission Statement

As far as the eye can see, there is nothing but sky above. Blue, up and up until I have to squint— not because of the position of the sun, but because I am beginning to strain my neck and the tension has made its way into the corners of my eyes. Bringing my gaze back to earth, the depth of blue begins to fade, and in a matter of seconds it is cut with the rusted umber of iron. My friend and are walking up and down the dirt road next to these 30-foot bollards sticking out of their concrete grave almost aimlessly, if only because of the awe. I am not inspired, but I am not shocked either. "Awe" as in fear and wonder. "Awe" as in respect what you fear and wonder. Fear and wonder as in the confusion of separation, and the relief proposed by isolation. Relief and comfort in aloneness, but the pain of knowing other comforts. Fear and wonder of possible worlds all happen here. I am in awe, in fear and wonder, of every glimpse through the bars that tells of something which has held the line between possible worlds before, and through my whole life. A variation or idea of a wall has been the rhetorical and physical stand in for the border— as if there is no other built environment of which to speak of. The implication is one that flattens the complexity of the region: all eyes on the wall razes the human and ecological histories and realities, creates a vast overabundance of abstracted space in order to invest importance and attention to infrastructures of exclusion, divesting

all other peoples, practices, and places of a representational (and thus symbolic) existence or value.

While this thesis' focus is on teasing out the spatial and performance dimensions of the Border Wall Prototypes, I understand it the case study as a hydra of sorts. In one sense, the BWP are a case study illustrative over a larger strategy of Statecraft and border making through infrastructure. On the other hand, they are a performance of the State's imagined geography, and in the case of the Trump administration, performance of a willingness to promote ruthless campaigns of exclusion. Thanks to the discursive turn enacted by Make Art Great Again, the BWP also offer insight into the ways that other representational forms mimic the shadow of such a rhetorical specter. The more questions I ask, the more heads appear.

There is the question of how or why these objects were placed in the Otay Mesa. While I fully believe the BWP are a symbolic gesture, and understand their location as being consistent with the history of barriers in the San Diego sector, surely pragmatic reasons also factored into the motivations of Department of Homeland Security. The first of which being that the Prototypes could only be built on federally managed land. According to an intended land use plan for San Diego County from 2011, the parcel where the Prototypes were built has been slated for "light industrial and commercial use." Accordingly, the Southern District of San Diego County has promoted a development plan to for the East Otay Mesa. The location is billed as a prime location for businesses, especially industrial development due to the proximity to Otay port of entry, Tijuana binational airport, and the San Diego harbor. These ports provide access to the East

Asian, West Coast and Mexican trade markets. Presented as San Diego's "final frontier", the East Otay Mesa is marketed as a new free-trade zone waiting to happen. Keller Easterling's note of the Zone as the germ for an urban metropolis is visible in the kinds of developers the county seeks to attract.

An image featuring what looks a marker for a building site, but mimics a flag bears the words "Stake your claim to a premier location." The Wild West abounds. I have some speculation that the federal government leased the parcel in the Otay Mesa from San Diego's South County in order to erect the Prototypes. I wonder if the newly developed East Otay Mesa will have cultural markers, monuments dedicated the boundless freedom and opportunity offered by "friendly local governments, a highly capable workforce and a perfect climate, this dynamic region offers an enticing array of incentives and financing programs designed to enhance business development."[54]

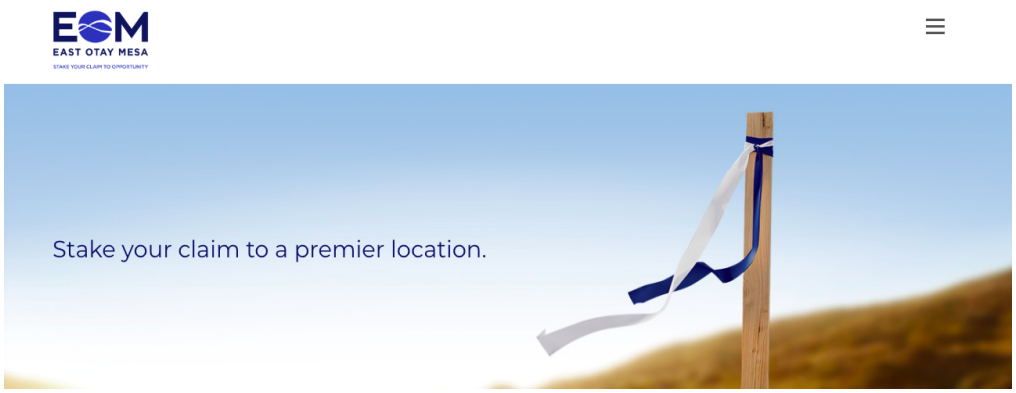

Fig. 6: Screenshot of East Otay Mesa promotional website. April 25, 2019.

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This is a direct quote located under a section titled "Ownership" on the East Otay Mesa's promotional "About" page ("Stake Your Claim to a Premier Location." *About | East Otay Mesa*, eastotaymesa.com/about/.).

Almost as if anticipating the kinds of formations that are consolidated in El Muro Rosa, the East Otay Mesa also boats of nearby shopping centers, world-class resorts, and "[f]or those with a taste for the exotic, Mexico's Pacific coastline is known for its pristine beaches, relaxed atmosphere and warm, welcoming culture." The possibility that the East Otay Mesa will develop into a neoliberal dreamland is not too far in the horizon.

Thinking again of the BWP as land art, what could be the cultural or aesthetic corollary to the neoliberal trends that produce these potential dreamlands? What is the meaning of a monument in a context of visceral and rapid economic development? What ideals are supposed to represented? What kinds of freedoms and opportunities celebrated? These are some of the questions that remain as a result of Make Art Great Again's attempts to preserve the BWP as monuments. Within the world of architectural preservation there is the move towards what has been referred to as dark heritage—namely, sites which are associated with atrocity, death, and destruction. When I went to Tijuana to visit the Border Wall Prototypes in December of 2018, I remember thinking of the site as being attractive to dark tourism. Like dark heritage, dark tourism revolves around places and venues associated toxic waste, murder, state violence, and all manner of events which city, state, and federal governments seek to erase or minimize. Sure enough, as I walked up to the bollard wall there was a couple looking at the BWP. After a few minutes and polite hellos, it was clear that both parties were aware of a mutual curiosity.

A friend who accompanied me was holding the camera we had brought to take images of the BWP as we struck up a brief conversation with our fellow onlookers. The

couple was from Toluca, the capital of the central Estado de Mexico, around an hour's drive away from Mexico City. They told us that they had come to Tijuana on vacation and decided they might as well check out the Prototypes since they were already here. Without a moment's pause we were asked if we were journalists. Maybe it was the camera that inspired this question, but despite offering to show my student ID, there was an insistence that I was actually a journalist. Almost as if to imply that there was no other reason to be there otherwise. Why else would anyone be here, taking pictures of these things? Why would anyone want to remember this place, these things, this moment unless they were already tasked with doing so (a journalist)? I believe that this reaction is part of the blinding to our conditions that de Certeau refers to. Thinking that spaces are no more than sources of odd attraction serves to flatten the potency of the built environment and the power of places human life exists in. If the BWP are classified as dark heritage monuments, it would mean acknowledging the systems of violence the site is entangled with on the border. If these new, morbid monuments cause us to "forget the future" it is because the objects are saturated with a shock of a present moment that feels unstable— a defining quality of the Trump administration's rapid (but clearly premeditated) legislative hijacking. It takes a lot of careful consideration and planning to coordinate multiple agencies, bills, orders, people to craft a spectacle that simultaneously promotes slow but steady extractivism and exclusion. I do not necessarily agree with MAGA that the BWP aid in forgetting the future. I find it more useful to consider the ways in which they expose an intended future. Marc Augé, in his theorization of the "non-place" as the location of super-modernity, writes that architecture allows the

observer to perceive the past-present-and future. In the present, there is an awareness that the current moment is structured by the past, and thus, "architecture, against the grain of the current dominant ideology of which it is part, seems to restore the meaning of time to us and speak to us of the future." (xvii) Following Augé, the structure of a "Border Wall" speaks of a legislative past and present that is oriented towards a geopolitical and spatial future fixed by the presence of a barrier. The difference is that for many people in the United States, that future is part of a past and present of isolation, exclusion, criminalization, and liminality. In late March of 2019 reports and images of Central American migrants held under the Paso del Norte International Bridge in El Paso, Texas made headlines. This present in the future that the BWP are intended to secure. Hundreds of migrants were being held in miserable conditions, the infrastructure space modified to provide "shelter" amid official claims that there simply is not room or facility to humanely house the amount of people seeking to enter the United States. Images from the site clearly show migrants behind chain link fencing that is topped with concertina razor wire. It occurs to me that this makeshift pen created by Customs and Border Patrol is a cruder version of what El Muro Rosa is designed for: containment.

In the wake of the family separations in the summer months of 2017, assaults on DACA, and criminalization of migrants, the impression I am left with is that the defense of human rights is not fully possible if we fail to understand the ways in which State power operates in the silent spaces of everyday life that surround us. To return to de Certeau, when we become blind to our conditions then we run the risk of reproducing them. The Trump administration's willingness to produce spectacles is not isolated to the

BWP. There is room to consider the ways in which the BWP were launched as a distraction from the violent assaults on spaces with "unperfected claims" to promote industries of extraction.

The executive orders signed on January 25, 2017 included the waving of environmental protections for "high priority" infrastructure projects and the BWP, but the ramifications and intentions of those orders were not solely about the Trump administration appearing to make do on a campaign promise. This is, in part of me that worries that the BWP. Such events distract from the truly worrisome legal precedent they set and the other, perhaps more obscured events they enable. Alongside these executive orders signed in the first days of the administration, was Executive Order 13678, which was an assault on sanctuary cities, essentially holding federal grants to these jurisdictions hostage unless they work with federal immigration agents to police the city space. The order also called for hiring an additional 10,000 immigration officers, in addition to the 5,000 new officers demanded in E.O. 13767, which built the prototypes. Another three presidential memorandums were issued within the first few days alongside these orders. These proclamations promoted American pipelines, and pushed forward the plans to construct the Keystone XL and North Dakota Access pipelines. Despite having been demolished, the Prototypes have a legal afterlife that is enduring.

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